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A HISTORY OF MODERN ENGLISH ROMANTICISM

As a faithful Register of Facts, I have every where adventur'd to tell Truth, in the most favourable Sense, as well of the Authors, as of their Writings; tho' probably I may have mentioned some Pieces, not worthy a particular Notice, and I may have omitted others which deserve Place in a Treatise of this Nature; but I hope all Objections of this kind will vanish, when the infinite Number of Poems extant is well consider'd; so that the best Care and greatest Diligence may look over some Things, tho' not very material to the Subject.

From the Preface of G. Jacob's "An Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of Our most Considerable English Poets, whether Epick, Lyrick, Elegiack, Epigrammatists, etc. London, Printed for E. Curll in Pater-Noster-Row. MDCCXX"

A HISTORY
OF
MODERN ENGLISH
ROMANTICISM

BY
Dr. HARKO G. DE MAAR

Vol. I.

Elizabethan and Modern Romanticism
in the
Eighteenth Century

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PREFACE

Not since the publication in 1893 of W. L. Phelps' "Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement" and of H. A. Beers' "History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century" in 1899, has any attempt been made to write a fairly complete English history of the Rise of Modern Romantic Poetry, based upon what must always be the chief source of information for such a history, namely, the works of the poets themselves, that is, of *all* the poets.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century many excellent monographs and papers have appeared dealing with this or that portion of the history of eighteenth century romanticism, but no one has in modern times endeavoured to present the history of early romantic poetry in its entirety with any claim to extensive original research. Helene Richter's "Geschichte der Englischen Romantik" (1911—1916) is an admirably suggestive work, but, starting as it does with Goldsmith, Walpole, Chatterton, Burke and their contemporaries, it must be considered rather as a history of early nineteenth than of eighteenth century romanticism.

My First Volume is devoted to a discussion of the relations between Elizabethan Romanticism and the Rise of Modern Romanticism. The Second Volume will trace the relations between Medieval Romanticism and Modern Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century. To the Third Volume belongs the important task of following in detail the Rise of Modern Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century. The Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Volumes will trace the course of Modern Romanticism down to the year 1914. Two additional volumes will contain extracts in prose and verse illustrative of the text of the *History*, the first will chiefly exemplify the romantic literature of the eighteenth, the second that of the nineteenth century.

I plead guilty to the charge of lack of conventional proportions. At first sight it may seem absurd to devote more space to Samuel Croxall than to William Shenstone, or to John Philips than to James Thomson. But I have not primarily viewed my material in the light of its intrinsic literary worth, which lies outside my plan, but in the light of its contribution of something characteristic towards the general movements of English poetry, and of its value as documentary evidence helping to throw light on the history of Modern Romanticism. If the reader wishes to know more about Shenstone and Thomson than he can find here, there are excellent books in plenty to suit his purpose; but if he desires to see the position, — viewed from the standpoint of the historian of Romance, — of Croxall and J. Philips, he may experience some difficulties in finding works on which to base his judgment.

The wealth of material has made the task of selection exceedingly difficult. When limits of space were against me, I have frequently had to be satisfied with choosing a few examples only of the principles and tendencies which I wished to demonstrate. It is hoped that the concise bibliographies will show the way to any one who may desire to pursue the path mapped out here.

So much has been written about the "classical" eighteenth century, about Spenserian and Miltonic "revivals" and romantic "revolts", that I sometimes doubt if the facts given in the following pages are facts after all. In these days of critical research, when from hour to hour our fund of information is being constantly increased, it may be shown that I have made mistakes in matters of minor importance. I hope, however, that I have at least given some novel and interesting facts concerning the beginnings of the greatest metamorphosis in English literature.

I gratefully acknowledge the help I have derived from the learned articles and books of that splendid band of American scholars who have done so much to create a better understanding and greater appreciation of that fine century, the eighteenth. In addition to the obligations acknowledged in the following chapters and bibliographies, I wish to mention here my special indebtedness to the works of Beers, Cory, Good, Havens, Morton, Phelps and Sherburn. Chapters VIII, IX, X and XI of the present volume were already finished when Havens' *magnum opus* appeared. Though I am mainly interested in a different aspect of the subject, it was a great satisfaction to me to see many of my larger generalisations and more minute points confirmed by one who had devoted so much profound thought and research to the study of Milton's influence on English poetry. I have had to re-write part of the chapters dealing with Milton in consequence of the stimulating suggestion of Havens' book, for which I hope I have made full acknowledgment.

It is a pleasure to me to record my special obligations to Mr. D. Nichol Smith of the University of Oxford.

In conclusion I cannot do better than let Roger Ascham speak for me:

"If any man would blame me, either for taking such a matter in hand, or else for writing it in the English tongue, this answer I may make him, that what the best of the realm think it honest for them to use, I, one of the meanest sort, ought not to suppose it vile for me to write. And though to have written it in another tongue, had been both more profitable for my study, and also more honest for my name, yet I can think my labour well bestowed, if with a little hindrance of my profit and name may come any furtherance to the pleasure or commodity of the gentlemen and yeomen of England, for whose sake I took this matter in hand".

82 van Boetzelaelaan } August
The Hague } 1924.

H. G. DE M.

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p. 108, l. 7 *for* 1755 *read* 1735.
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p. 133, footnote 1 *for* E. G. Courthope *read* W. J. Courthope.
p. 133, footnote 3 *for* Rhetoirc *read* Rhetoric.
p. 138, l. 8 *for* eighteenth century literary criticism *read* modern
criticism of eighteenth century literature.
p. 150, footnote 2 *for* Wood *read* Wooll; *for* Thomas *read* Joseph.
p. 203, l. 24 *for* 1742 *read* 1642.
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CHAPTER I

ROMANTICISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

The spirit of romance is as old as human language. There have been times when the current of romance was feeble, as in the ascendancy of Rome. There have been times when the frame of the world rested not on facts, but on wonders, when life was hardly counted by days, when the mace of barbarism, beating on the rock of Roman civilisation, called forth a spring of romance which still freshens all the literature of modern Europe. Literary history is a spiritual tide whose ebb and flow are the reflurence and the resurgence of romance.

The term romance was first used to denote the vernacular language of France, as opposed to Latin. In later use it was extended to related forms of speech, such as Provençal and Spanish, until it became a collective name for the whole group of languages descended from Latin. Thus in Edward Brerewood's "Enquiries touching the Diversities of Languages and Religions through the chief parts of the world" (1614): "The Italian, French and Spanish, all which in a barbarous word have been called Romance, as you would say, Roman".

In England the word romance was first applied to a book in the fourteenth century. From denoting a composition in vernacular French, Spanish, and so forth, as contrasted with works in Latin, the meaning of the word narrowed down to signify a tale in verse or prose, embodying the adventures of some hero of chivalry. This meaning continued to be the only one in the Middle Ages and was,

of course, well-known in the eighteenth century. The old heroic romances were still quite popular in the age of Pope and afterwards. An interesting illustration of this is to be found in Thomas Warton's copy of Spenser's Works (1617), which is full of the most significant annotations. The copy is in the British Museum and is signed and dated "T. Warton 1744". The last page of Canto I, Book I, has the following footnote:

"Magicians, in Romances, are often feign'd to raise Personages on purpose to deceive. There is a fine Passage of this kind in the Seven Champions C. 8. P. 2. The Magician caused by his Art a spirit in the likeness of a Lady of a marvellous and fair Beauty to look through an iron gate, who seem'd to lean her fair face upon her white hand very pensively and distilled from her crystal Eyes great Abundance of Tears, etc., etc. Spenser here makes a beautifull use of that Expedient."

Bishop Percy, too, wrote of the old romances in the "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry" (Vol. iii, 1765):

"The old metrical Romances throw light on our old writers in prose."

The second outburst of the spirit of romance in the adolescence of English literature, — the flamboyant age of Queen Elizabeth, — applied the word in a new sense. It now denoted a fictitious narrative in prose of which the incidents are very remote from those of ordinary life. In the eighteenth century Samuel Johnson used it in this sense when he wrote:

"In romance, when the wide field of possibility lies open to invention, the incidents may easily be made more numerous." ¹⁾

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the adjective "romantic" has been contrasted with "classic"

¹⁾ The Idler, No. 84, 1759.

in England. Though useful and necessary, the terms are fraught with danger when applied to literature. They may give and frequently have given rise to confusion. They have been used to include so many different characteristics that, as soon as they are applied to men or books, it is quite certain that some of their connotations will not exactly apply to the author or work in question. But they are most unsatisfactory of all when applied to literary periods. It will not suffice to say that the eighteenth century was "classical" and the nineteenth "romantic". No period belongs exclusively to the one category or to the other. Indeed, it may be doubted whether any single author can be relegated wholly to one or other of these categories. Both elements persist at all times and in all places. The struggle for predominance between these opposing forces is everlasting in the human soul and in literature. In both the struggle is regulated by the spirit of the age, the spirit that rules both men and books. It is true to say Pope and Johnson were classic, Thomson and Goldsmith romantic. But this should not be taken in the sense that Thomson and Goldsmith are free from classic traits, — that the author of the "Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard" (1717) is never romantic and that the writer of "London" (1730) and "The Vanity of Human Wishes" (1749) has no emotional fervour. The very basis of these two poems is the impassioned discontent and unrest which are the essential mark of the romantic element in literature. It is true that Johnson tries to make his meaning as clear as possible, that he has sanity, that he is refined, that he writes neat, melodious verse; but each of these qualities is true of Shakespeare as well. Nor was there an impassable gulf between Pope and Thomson, or between Johnson and Goldsmith.

Yet a distinction between the terms classic and romantic is inevitable, since they are rooted in the human mind

and represent powerful mental processes. But let us beware of taking "wide and wider sweeps". We apply the distinction that classic poets have a feeling for the value of form and that romantic poets care not for form, but content. Can these however be separated? Do we ever read a poem with attention to content alone? Or is classicism intellectual, romanticism emotional? Are these not equally and at the same time characteristics of all great poets? Do we not find both heart and head, both passion and intellect in all? Sincerity, indignation, satire, too, belong to all schools. They are not distinctive marks of romanticism or classicism. Is a romantic poet personal, a classic impersonal? But how should we fit Pope and Scott into this distinction? Pope certainly was nothing if not personal; while Scott had throughout life an unconquerable dislike of exhibiting his own feelings. If anybody, he was impersonal.

We cannot carry these criticisms to their conclusion, since a final and satisfactory definition is impossible. To define in literature is practically little more than to give a nickname. Only in the exact sciences can we have absolute definitions, because here the definition can be comprehensive. But literature is a living organism; books are as hard to be known as persons and any definition of a living organism must always be based on subjective impressions, on opinions and feelings. The poets of the modern romantic movement, which reached its height in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats, were conscious of their own romanticism. They were sure of it, but they did not define it; and they were right.

However, when we approach the words classic and romantic from a historical standpoint, we are on safe ground. After we have seen when and how they were first used, how their connotations developed and were

finally contrasted, we shall perhaps be able to hazard an enumeration of some of the main characteristics of the "classic" and the "romantic".

The earliest known use of the adjective romantic appears to have been in 1659. Henry More, who belonged to the little band of Christian Platonists which was formed at Cambridge in the middle of the seventeenth century, used the term in "The Immortality of the Soul, so farre forth as it is demonstrable from the Knowledge of Nature and the Light of Reason" (1659). More says: "I speak especially of that Imagination which is most free, such as we use in Romantick Invention"¹).

Other early references prove that from the beginning the word signified: "Of the nature of romance, of a fabulous or fictitious character, fantastic, extravagant". But the modern, more aesthetic sense: "Invested with imaginative appeal, appealing to the imagination and feelings", is found at an early date, as the following references will show:

1666. Pepys' Diary, 13 June: "There happened this extraordinary case, — One of the most romantique that ever I heard in my life, and could not have believed, but that I did see it; which was this: — About a dozen able, lusty, proper men came to the coach-side with tears in their eyes, and one of them that spoke for the rest begun and says to Sir W. Coventry, "We are here a dozen of us that have long known and loved and served our dead commander, Sir Christopher Ming, and have now done the last office of laying him in the ground. We would be glad we had any other to offer after him, and in revenge of him. All we have is our lives; if you will please to get his Royal Highness to give us a fireship among us all, here is a dozen of us, out of all which choose

¹) Vol. II. xi.

you one to be commander, and the rest of us, whoever he is, will serve him; and if possible, do that shall show our memory of our commander, and our revenge."

Sir W. Coventry was herewith much moved (as well as I, who could hardly abstain from weeping), and took their names, and so parted; telling me that he would move his Royal Highness as in a thing very extraordinary, which was done."

1700. Nicholas Rowe, *The Ambitious Step-Mother* (ii, i):

"Ungrateful Lord!

Would'st thou invade my Life, as a Return
For proffer'd Love? But let th'Event declare
How great a Good by me sincerely offer'd
Thy dull Romantick Honour has refus'd."

1701. John Philips, "The Splendid Shilling":

"Invoaks *Cambro-Britain* (versed in Pedigree,
Sprung from *Cadwalader* and *Arthur*, ancient Kings,
Full famous in Romantic tale)"

1701. Joseph Addison. *Letters from Italy*, I, 359.

"It is so Romantic a scene, that it has always probably given occasion to such Chimerical Relations".

The place of Addison in the history of the rise of romanticism is highly important. There are those who divide the poets of the eighteenth century into romantic and classic. For them Addison is a classic of the classics. But in reality he is the true founder of the romantic idea in England and he first made the adjective "romantic" popular. This appears from the following passage in a letter to Congreve, written in December 1699 from Blois, where he prefers the picturesqueness of Fontainebleau to the marble splendours of Versailles:

"I don't believe, as good a poet as you are, that you

can make finer landscapes than those about the King's houses, or with all your descriptions build a more magnificent palace than Versailles. I am however so singular as to prefer Fontainebleau to all the rest. It is situated among rocks and woods that give you a fine variety of savage prospects. The king has humoured the genius of the place, and only made use of so much art as is necessary to help and regulate nature without reforming her too much. The cascades seem to break through the clefts and cracks of rocks, that are covered over with moss, and look as if they were piled upon one another by accident. There is an artificial wildness in the meadows, walks and canals, and the garden, instead of a wall, is fenced on the lower end by a natural mound of rock-work, that strikes the eye very agreeably. For my part, I think there is something more charming in these rude heaps of stone than in so many statues, and would as soon see a river winding through woods and meadows as when it is tossed up in such a variety of figures at Versailles." ¹).

Addison repeated this statement verbatim in "The Guardian" (No. 101). In "The Spectator" (No. 414) he once more preferred the "wide fields of nature" to the "beauties of the most stately garden or palace."

"There is something more bold and masterly in the rough careless strokes of nature, than in the nice touches and embellishments of Art". He prefers "the artificial rudeness" of Italian and French gardens to the "neatness and elegance" of English Gardens and says that "he would rather look upon a tree in all its luxuriance and diffusion of boughs and branches than when it is thus cut into a mathematical figure."

¹) "The Works of Addison", by G. W. Greene, 1856. Vol. II, p. 463.

Though the word romantic is not used here, and romantic practice is conspicuous by its absence in Addison, the romantic theory is evident. Addison's romantic mood was only a mood of the moment; his works prove abundantly that it was not lasting. But his voice was not the voice of one crying in the wilderness, a wilderness of the deadliest classicism, as the orthodox literary historians would have it. The following passage is romantic enough:

"Brown shades, and flowering meadows, the winding stream, and the old ruins, the distant woods gilded with sunshine, and beyond all the bluish mountains."

This looks like Wordsworth, Scott and Shelley in succession, but is merely a quotation from the preface of "The Secret History of Pythagoras. Part I. Translated from The original Copy lately found at Otranto in Italy. By J. W. M. D. London, 1721"¹).

Addison knew and understood the term "romantic". We have seen how he used it in his "Letters from Italy". In the discussion of the Ballad of Chevy Chase (Spectator No. 74) the mention of the stanza:

"Lo, yonder doth Earl Douglas come,
His Men in Armour bright,
Full twenty hundred Scottish Spears,
All marching in our sight.
All Men of pleasant Tividale,
Fast by the River Tweed,"

makes him say:

"The Country of the Scotch Warriors, described in these two last verses, has a fine romantic situation, and affords a couple of smooth Words for Verse."
And in his criticism of "Paradise Lost" (Spect. 303)

¹) The general catalogue of the British Museum attributes the work to Samuel Croxall.

he says: "The Account of Thammuz is finely Romantick, and suitable to what we read among the Antients of the Worship which was paid to that Idol."

After Addison the term romantic was of common occurrence. Hughes employed it in his edition of Spenser. Lady Mary Wortley Montague used it in her correspondence. We have seen how Percy and Johnson used it. We shall now see what was the meaning of the term "classic".

The adjective "classic" had from the start two distinct meanings, both being first used in the early part of the seventeenth century. The term signified "of the first class, approved as a model", as well as: "belonging to the standard authors and literature of Greek and Latin antiquity". In the eighteenth century the word was never used as opposed to "romantic". The authors of the first half of the eighteenth century thought and wrote much about literature and art, they knew Elizabethan romance probably better than most of us (the frequency of their quotations from and references to Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton proves it), but though they knew the term "romantic", they did not deem it necessary to draw a contrast between "classic" and "romantic". It was the mistake of the nineteenth century to force that contrast too strongly upon the eighteenth.

The eighteenth century, however, used the term "Gothic" to designate medieval romanticism. Anything characteristic of the Middle Ages was called Gothic. The sense of "barbarous, rude, uncouth," continued from 1695 to 1841, but as early as 1710 Shaftesbury used the word in the secondary meaning:

"To their (i.e. the Elizabethan dramatists') eternal honour they have withall been the first of Europeans who, since the Gothic Model of Poetry, attempted to throw off the horrid Discord of jingling Rhyme." ¹⁾

¹⁾ Shaftesbury: "Characteristics", I, iii, 217.

Soon after Addison used the term in *The Spectator*, No. 74, in the same sense:

"If this song (i.e. Chevy Chase) had been written in the Gothic manner, which is the delight of all our little wits, whether writers or readers, it would not have hit the taste of so many ages and have pleased the readers, of all ranks and conditions."

The last quotation is interesting in that it shows that Addison drew a contrast between the simplicity of Chevy Chase and the "Gothic manner" popular in his day.

A contrast between Gothic in the sense of medieval and classic was often drawn in the course of the century. In his edition of "*The Faerie Queene*" (1715) Hughes drew a parallel between Roman and Gothic architecture.

"To compare it (i.e. "*The Faerie Queene*") with the models of Antiquity would be like drawing a parallel between the *Roman* and the *Gothick* architecture. In the first there is, doubtless, a more natural grandeur and simplicity, in the latter we find great mixtures of beauty and barbarism, yet assisted by the invention of inferior ornaments; and though the former is more majestic on the whole, the latter may be very surprising and agreeable in its parts."

It should be noted that the terms are not applied to the poem, but to architecture. Nearly forty years later Hughes' language was almost word for word copied in Theophilus Cibber's "*Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland*" (1753). It was only in the latter half of the century, in 1762, that Hurd ventured to apply this distinction to poetry. In his important "*Letters on Chivalry and Romance*" he wrote:

"He (Spenser) could have planned, no doubt, an heroic design on the exact classic model: Or, he might have trimmed between the *Gothic* and *Classic*, as his contemporary Tasso did.... Under this idea then of

a *Gothic*, not *classical* poem, the *Faery Queen* is to be read and criticized". (p. 56).

When two years later Horace Walpole published "The Castle of Otranto, a Gothic Story", the word Gothic for "romantic" began a vigorous existence which lasted two decades. Thus Samuel Johnson in his "Life of Tickell":

"Of the poems yet unmentioned the longest is Kensington Gardens, of which the versification is smooth and elegant, but the fiction unskilfully compounded of Grecian deities and Gothick Fairies. Neither species of those exploded Beings could have done much, and when they are brought together, they only make each other contemptible."

Yet, though Johnson used "Gothic" almost as a term of reproach, others were thoroughly under the Gothic glamour. Nothing could be more typical of this than Thomas Warton's "Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds's Painted Window at New College, Oxford", (1782):

"Long have I lov'd to catch the simple chime
To view the festive rites, the knightly play,
That deck'd heroic Albion's elder day;
To mark the mouldering halls of barons bold,
And the rough castle, cast in giant mould,
With Gothic manners Gothic arts explore
And muse on the magnificence of yore."

The contrast between romantic and classic was introduced into England from Germany only about the time of the appearance of the first instalment of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" and of the first of the Waverley Novels. The Quarterly Review for October 1814 (p. 113) contains, in an article discussing a French translation of A. W. Schlegel's "Cours de Littérature Dramatique. Traduit d'Allemand" (London, 1814), the following sentence:

"The comparative merit of the ancients and mo-

derns has long afforded abundant matter for dispute. Latterly, however, men of literary reputation, particularly in Germany, have endeavoured to simplify the question. Without detracting from the excellence of their precursors, they were desirous of establishing the claims of their contemporaries upon a sure and solid foundation. This investigation led them to distinguish the productions of antiquity, by the appellation of *classic*, those of modern times by that of *romantic*, a name intended to designate the popular idioms that have been formed by a mixture of the Latin tongue with the ancient dialects of Germany."

There is an interesting footnote to this passage:

"Madame de Stael has made the British public familiar with these expressions."

Since that time there has hardly been a literary critic who has not expressed his opinion about the distinction between classic and romantic.

Though it may be impossible to frame a final and absolute definition of the terms classic and romantic, an attempt must be made, even if it be doomed to failure, at least to focus their meanings a little more sharply. It must be clear, however, that all the qualities of romanticism or classicism will seldom exist in combination in the works of one and the same author.

Romantic literature is that which joins a sense of mystery, wonder, and curiosity as well as individuality in form and thought, to ornamental language and technique; classic literature is that which joins a sense of self-control and poise, as well as conventionality in form and thought, to clarity of language and technique. The romantic character in art consists in the addition of strangeness to beauty. The classic character in art consists in the addition of restraint and flawlessness to beauty. The essential element of the romantic spirit is curiosity joined to a love

of beauty. Romantic poets are often at the mercy of their inspiration; classic poets are mostly the masters of their inspiration. Classic literature embodies the repose of the world; romantic literature the restlessness of the world. A classic work of art is like a Greek temple; it stands or falls by its perfect fitness in the relations of its parts to the whole; it is right as a whole and has due proportions as a whole. A romantic work of art is like a Gothic cathedral; it impresses not by its mass effect, but by its detail and variety.

The words romantic and classic have a more restricted meaning as well. We have endeavoured to approach their significance from a human and an aesthetic point of view. We must now see what historical bearing they have, in other words, what different aspects these great impulses assumed in the successive periods of the history of English men and books.

English literature exhibits three great romantic movements; that is to say, there were three periods when the prevailing artistic spirit was romantic. This does not mean, of course, that the classic spirit did not exist; for even in the heyday of romance there were classic minds enough. The three periods of romanticism may be termed palaeo-romanticism, meso-romanticism and neo-romanticism, or Medieval, Elizabethan and Modern Romanticism.

Medieval Romanticism came to England after the Norman Conquest. Throughout the Middle English period there was a broad stream of romance. It differs from Elizabethan and Modern Romanticism in its close union with religion. Two typical examples of this union are the Arthurian legends and the medieval cathedral. The Elizabethans were not far wrong when they called the old romances "monkish"; in England the writers of romance were mostly priests.

Elizabethan Romanticism is characterised by the spirit of wonder created by the Renaissance blended with the soaring of the national spirit after the defeat of the Armada. In the realm of the drama the Elizabethans had endeavoured to conform English drama to Senecan models. But the new spirit of freedom roused a flood of the romantic spirit and the classical tradition in drama was largely swept away.

Spenser embodies the romantic spirit of the Elizabethan age. To some he is the dawn of a new poetry, to others the sunset of chivalry. But he is both. When we remember that he gives us the last great pageant of chivalry, when we think of his allegorical method and of his infusion of moral idealism into romance, then surely we must feel that he is the last of an age. But when we recollect his mastery of colour, his atmosphere of mystery, and his sensuous beauty of style, we must feel that he is the herald of a new era of poetry, that he is the central link in the chain of English romanticism.

Milton showed what a judicious blending of classic culture and romantic sensuousness can produce. He was the last of the giant race of Elizabethan romanticists. But Elizabethan romance did not die at once, it continued well into the eighteenth century, though this was but the last ripple of the great Elizabethan wave.

The romanticism peculiar to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is different from both the Medieval and the Elizabethan. We shall endeavour to show that Elizabethan romance was continued into the eighteenth century, and that Medieval romance was to a large extent revived in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Both were embodied in modern romanticism. But new elements went to the making of modern romance as well. There was a new treatment of nature, a new interest in popular customs, a growing emotionalism taking several forms,

an interest in the supernatural, a more individual spirit. The movement reached its zenith in Wordsworth, the poet of Nature and Man, in Coleridge with his pursuit of the occult in poetry and the remote in metaphysics, in the antiquarian zeal of Scott, in the subjectivity of Byron, in the voluptuous opulence of Keats, in the ethereal ardour of Shelley. This was Modern Romanticism, the greatest metamorphosis in English literature.

CRITICISM

[Most of the older authorities (De Musset, Heine, Nisard, Brunetière, etc.) have not been included.]

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CHAPTER II

ENGLISH EDITIONS OF SPENSER, SHAKESPEARE AND MILTON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

"Those do but sell books to such as come for them."

G. Wither — The Schollers Purgatory.

The relation between the popularity of an author and his actual circulation is a somewhat difficult question. Occasionally reprintings may not prove much. But in the eighteenth century, when the London bookseller-publisher was the real patron and could practically decide whether the work of an author, whose living depended on his pen, would be printed at all, reprints must count for a good deal ¹⁾. The Tonsons, Lintot, Dodsley and the other publishers of the century were men who knew the taste of the public and who were in business to make a profit. They not only published books offered to them, but also planned "Miscellanies" and "Collections" and reprinted older poets. They knew the reading public too well to print a book of poetry that might be a drug in the market. The relative popularity of authors in a community as a whole may be assayed by the extent of the demand for their books maintained over a long period (for time plays strange tricks with the "best-sellers" of a season). We may then safely assume, when ten editions of Spenser ²⁾, at least seventy complete editions

¹⁾ Compare Gibbon's remark in his Autobiography: "The patronage of English literature has long since devolved on our booksellers."

²⁾ See Appendix I. There were editions of the works in 1715, 1750, 1778, 1782, and 1793, editions of *The Faerie Queene* in 1751, 1758, and 1758—59 and of the *Shepherd's Calendar* in 1732 and 1758.

of Milton ¹⁾, over a hundred editions of "Paradise Lost" ²⁾, and eleven independent editions of Shakespeare's collected works or plays, most of which were reprinted several times (yielding a total of about fifty editions), as well as a large number of editions of the separate plays ³⁾, came from the press in England in the course of the eighteenth century, that Spenser was in fair demand, Milton more read than any other poet, and Shakespeare an object of profound interest both to scholars, to "the stage" and to "the general reader".

Appendix I contains a list of the editions of Spenser's poems in the eighteenth century. When Spenser's complete works were first reprinted (after the edition of 1611) in 1679, the first three cantos of "The Faerie Queene" had been reprinted seven times ⁴⁾. In the Restoration days Spenser's poems were but little sold. In William London's "Catalogue of the most vendible books in England" (1658) Spenser is not mentioned and in Fuller's "Worthies of England" (1662) the small success of Spenser's poems is ascribed to his antiquated diction ⁵⁾.

The first edition of Spenser in the eighteenth century was John Hughes' "The Works of Mr. Edmund Spenser, with a glossary explaining the old and obscure words. Published by Mr. Hughes, London, 6 vol. J. Tonson, London, 1715." John Hughes was a friend of Addison and Steele; he wrote for "The Tatler", "The Spectator" and "The Guardian". Steele said of him in "The Theatre" that his pen was always engaged in raising the mind to

¹⁾ According to the general catalogue of Printed Books in the British Museum.

²⁾ See R. D. Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry*. Harvard 1922, p. 4.

³⁾ See D. N. B., Shakespeare.

⁴⁾ See the Works of Edmund Spenser, by R. Morris (Globe Edition) p. XXXV. London, 1907.

⁵⁾ F. Böhme. *Spenser's Literarisches Nachleben bis zu Shelley*, Palaestra 93. Berlin, 1911, p. 72, Note 7.



CHAUCER, SPENSER, MILTON AND POPE.

Engraving from Dodsley's "Collection of Poems in Six Volumes by Several Hands", vol.3, p. 302. (1758). It is placed opposite the title-page of "Musaeus, A Monody to the Memory of Mr. Pope. In Imitation of Milton's Lycidas. By the same". (i. e. William Mason).

It illustrates the attitude of the eighteenth century towards Pope, Spenser and Milton better than anything else could do.

what was noble and virtuous¹). It seems very probable that there is some connection between Hughes' edition and Steele's letter about Spenser in "The Spectator", No. 840 (Nov. 19, 1712), where Steele says: "You will lose much of my kind inclination towards you if you do not attempt the encomium of Spenser also, or at least indulge my passion for that charming author so far as to print the loose hints I now give you on the subject." Nor is it a mere coincidence, probably, that the first three genuine Spenserian imitations, i. e. imitations written in the nine-line Spenserian stanza, not in some neo-classical "improvement", appeared in 1713 and 1714.

Hughes anticipated Joseph Warton's "Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope" (1756—1782) and Thomas Warton's "Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser" (1753). Joseph Warton awarded Pope a place next after Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton and said that in Pope and his imitators imagination had been subordinate to logical theory. Thomas Warton wrote: "A poetry succeeded in which imagination gave way to correctness, sublimity of description to delicacy of sentiment and majestic imagery to conceit and epigram." John Hughes had long before the Wartons expressed the same views with regard to "The Faerie Queene". In the opening lines of his "Remarks on the Fairy Queen" (1715, 2nd edition 1750) he said:

"The chief merit of this Poem consists in that surprising vein of fabulous invention, which runs through it, and enriches it every where with Imagery and Descriptions more than we meet with in any other modern Poem. The Author seems to be possess'd by a kind of Poetical Magick; and the Figures he calls up to our view rise so thick upon us, that we are at once pleased and distracted by the exhaustless

¹) The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. IX, p. 144.

Variety of them; so that his Faults may in a manner be imputed to his Excellencies: His Abundance betrays him into Excess, and his Judgement is overborne by the Torrent of his Imagination."

Imagination was for Hughes as well as for the Wartons the chief excellence of "The Faerie Queene". For, as Hughes observes, Spenser "chose to frame his Fable after a Model which might give the greatest Scope to that Range of Fancy which was so remarkably his Talent."

Hughes' attitude towards "The Faerie Queene" is medieval in its frank and uncritical acceptance of the artistic validity of such an intimate fusion between moral purpose and romantic form. Nowadays the allegory is often regarded as tedious. The Elizabethans and Augustans considered its allegorical and epic more than its romantic values. To the former many of the nineteenth century romantics were blind.

Yet Hughes and his contemporary Spenserians were in advance of their times. Croxall's first "Canto" of 1713 was reprinted three times; his second canto of 1714 was never reprinted; and Samuel Johnson tells us that Hughes' edition was but a moderate success. "He did not revive the curiosity of the public very much, for nearly thirty years elapsed before his edition was reprinted" ¹).

The re-issue took place in 1750 and the next year Brindley published another edition of Spenser with notes by Dr. Birch. By 1750, then, Spenser's popularity had become somewhat greater. In 1758 there appeared two editions of "The Faerie Queene", the one edited by John Upton and published by Tonson, the other by Ralph Church, published by William Fadon.

During the last quarter of the century Spenser's poetical works were reprinted in two collections of British Poets, viz. in Bell's and Anderson's editions.

¹) Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, 1783, Vol. II, p. 425.

Dryden's poetical works were reprinted in 1701, 1718, 1741, 1743, 1761, 1767, 1777 (Bell's edition), 1779 (Johnson's), 1790 (Johnson's), 1793 (Anderson's) and Joseph Warton's (1799). At various times some of the poems were reprinted in collections, "An Ode for St. Cecilia's Day" being the favourite ¹⁾. Dryden's poems, therefore, appeared in eleven more or less complete editions, whilst Spenser's poems appeared in five editions. "The Faerie Queene" was published three times and "The Shepheardes Calender" twice in separate editions.

The attitude of the first quarter of the eighteenth century towards Dryden and Spenser is well illustrated by a comparison of Giles Jacob's remarks about the two poets. As early as 1720 Jacob wrote a prototype of Johnson's "Lives of the Poets". In this year Curll published: "An Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of our most considerable English Poets, whether Epick, Lyrick, Elegiack, Epigrammatists, etc.". Jacob gives details of the lives of about 215 poets. He devotes three-and-a-half pages to Dryden and eight-and-a-half pages to Spenser. Dryden, says Jacob, is "an excellent poet". He is "the most elegant Translator of Poetry that any Age has produc'd: His Works sufficiently show what our Language is capable of; and to give Specimens of his Beauties, would be endless, he has so many Excellencies and was such a universal Writer." This is all that is said in praise of Dryden. But Spenser is:

"a Poet of the greatest Reputation".... "His *Fairy Queen*, for great Invention and Poetick Height, is judg'd little inferiour, if not equal to the chief of the ancient *Greeks* and *Latins*. He had a large spirit, a sharp Judgment and a Genius beyond any that

¹⁾ See The Cambridge History of Eng. Lit. Vol. VIII, Bibliography to Chap. I, p. 39. This bibliography is incomplete as regards the eighteenth century. The above lists have been checked in the British Museum.

have writ since *Virgil*: his Flights of Fancy are noble, and his Execution excellent; but sometimes his Judgment is overborne by the torrent of his Imagination."

The attitude of the age towards "The Faerie Queene" is well summed up by Jacob:

"And as for his *Fairy Queen*, tho' it was never taken to be a perfect poem, yet it was from the beginning allow'd to be admirable."

But the usual criticism is not lacking:

"He seem'd to want a true Idea and Uniformity; though whatever fault this may be, he endows all his Heroes with some moral Virtue (though in a romantick story) and makes Instruction the subject of his Epick Poem, which is very much to his praise."

The opinions about Spenser held by critics of the first half of the eighteenth century were also summarised in Theophilus Cibber's "An Account of the Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland" (1753), a book which contains little original matter, but sums up what earlier compilers, Langbaine, Jacob and others had written. It gave what the public desired. Cibber (or probably one of the "other hands" mentioned on the title-page) says:

"To produce authorities in favour of Spenser, as a poet, I should reckon an affront to his memory; that is a tribute which I shall only pay to inferior wits, whose highest honour it is to be mentioned with respect, by geniuses of a superior class. The works of Spenser will never perish, though he has introduced unnecessarily many obsolete terms into them; there is a flow of poetry, an elegance of sentiment, a fund of imagination, and an enchanting enthusiasm which will ever secure him the applause of posterity while any lovers of poetry remain" ¹⁾.

¹⁾ Vol. I, p. 100.

To Cibber Spenser was, as to many of his contemporaries, the poets' poet:

"In elegance of thinking and fertility of imagination few of our English authors have approached him and no writers have such power as he to awake the spirit of poetry in others. Cowley owns that he derived his inspiration from him; and I have heard the celebrated Mr. James Thomson, the author of the Seasons, and justly esteemed one of our best descriptive poets, say, that he formed himself upon Spenser: and how closely he pursued the model, and how nobly he has imitated him, whoever reads his *Castle of Indolence* with taste, will readily confess." ¹⁾

In "Modern Philology" Vol. XVII, No. 5 (Sept. 1919, p. 76) G. Sherburn gives a table of the various editions of Milton's poems up to 1740. The table is based on Dr. Good's "Studies in the Milton Tradition" ²⁾. It shows that up to 1740 "Paradise Lost" had been printed either in separate editions or in other forms, twenty-nine times, "Paradise Regained", sixteen times and "Samson Agonistes" also sixteen times.

Dr. Good's lists show that in the eighteenth century there were over seventy complete editions of Milton's poems, that "Paradise Lost" was printed about a hundred times, "Paradise Regained" fifty-seven times, "Samson Agonistes" sixty-two times, "Comus" seventy-seven times, "Lycidas" sixty and "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", between 1640 and 1801, as many as one hundred and thirty times.

Up to 1678 about 3000 copies of "Paradise Lost" must have been sold ³⁾. In this year the third edition was publish-

¹⁾ Vol. I, p. 99.

²⁾ J. W. Good, "Studies in the Milton Tradition" 1915. (University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. I, Nos. 3 & 4).

³⁾ See "The Poetical Works of John Milton" by David Masson. Globe Edition, London 1907, p. 6 and S. Johnson, *Life of Milton*, G. B. Hill, I, p. 141 ff.

ed and ten years later came a fourth published by Tonson. Tonson obtained more than 500 subscribers, including most of the eminent people of London. Other editions followed in 1692 and 1695. Some of these editions were bound up with other poems of Milton and the last contained a huge critical commentary.

In 1700 therefore "Paradise Lost" was easily accessible in cheap as well as in folio editions and up to the year 1750 the three members of the Tonson family supplied the public with new editions with great regularity. There had been three Dublin editions in 1724, 1747, and 1748 to compete against Tonson's, and after Newton's edition of 1749—52 other London and Edinburgh publishers issued editions of Milton in competition with Tonson.

The only edition of this time that requires special notice is Bentley's. In 1732 Richard Bentley, the great classical scholar, edited Milton at the request of Queen Caroline. The fact that this eminent scholar not only finds "vituous constructions" and "absonous numbers" in Milton, but discovers, by assuming a fictitious editor, many spurious passages and corrects the poet in many places, ought to make us understand and appreciate the position of Percy, Macpherson, Chatterton and other "forgers". But also in Bentley's days there were people who took up the modern attitude towards an author's text. David Mallet in his "Of Verbal Criticism" (1733) took Bentley to task:

"While Bentley, long to wrangling schools confin'd
And but by books, acquainted with mankind,
Dares, in the fulness of the pedant's pride,
Rhyme, tho' no genius; though no judge decide
Yet he, prime pattern of the captious art,
Out-tibbalding poor Tibbald, tops his part:
Holds high the scourge o'er each fam'd author's head;
Nor are their graves a refuge for the dead.
To Milton lending sense, to Horace wit
He makes them write what never poet writ!

In a note Mallet says "This sagacious scholiast is pleased to create an imaginary editor of Milton, who, he says, by his blunders, interpolations and vile alterations lost *Paradise* a second time." By his treatment of Milton Bentley well deserves Pope's appellation "murderous critic" ¹⁾).

By 1763 "*Paradise Lost*" had been reprinted at least forty-six times ²⁾. Now "*The Rape of the Lock*", which was no doubt one of the most popular poems, was reprinted, separately or in combination with other pieces, only about a dozen times between 1712 and 1732 ³⁾. It will hardly, therefore, be an exaggeration to say that "*Paradise Lost*" was read as much as any other poem of the day, though it cannot of course be established how far that popularity was confined to the circles of literary culture.

Measured by the criterion of the frequency of editions, Milton's reputation may well be said to have been continuous. It may also be accepted that, considering the eighteenth century as a whole, the demand for his poems was greater than the demand for the works of Dryden and Pope. This alone is enough to show that it is wrong to speak of a revival of Milton, since revival implies death and Milton had not died.

But the case of Spenser is different. The general public for a long time considered his language affected and archaic. Many of the Augustan poets, who wrote in nervous, colloquial English, would not adopt his archaisms. Though the many critical comments and the editions

¹⁾ On the appearance of Bentley's edition Pope wrote:
 "Did Milton's prose, O Charles, thy death defend?
 A furious foe unconscious proves a friend.
 On Milton's verse did Bentley comment? Know
 A weak officious friend becomes a foe.
 While he but sought his author's fame to further
 The murderous critic has avenged thy murder."

²⁾ Masson's "*Life of Milton*", Vol. VI, p. 789.

³⁾ G. Sherburn, "Early popularity of Milton's *Minor Poems*", *Modern Philology*, Vol. XVII, No. 5, p. 48.

show that Spenser's reputation too was continuous, the public did not buy his poems in any considerable quantity before the beginning of the second half of the century.

That Shakespeare's romantic plays were exceedingly popular in the eighteenth century is now a well-established fact ¹⁾. Some of the greatest men of letters of the century devoted diligent care to the work of textual emendation and elucidation. Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, Warburton, Johnson, Capell, Steevens and Malone edited the works of Shakespeare. Rowe's Shakespeare (1709, 1710) was the first octavo and the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare. It had a portrait frontispiece to each volume and an engraving to every play. Rowe was the first to present a biography of the poet, and his edition was the first to bear an editor's name. A popular edition of all the plays in separate volumes was issued by Tonson in 1734. They were distributed by book-pedlars throughout the country. The sale was such a success that a rival publisher followed Tonson's example in the same year. Of Theobald's edition, which was reprinted four times, 12,860 copies in all were sold ²⁾.

In the eighteenth century Shakespeare's popularity on the stage was, relatively speaking, greater than in our own days. There were more unfavourable criticisms than to-day; there were stupid alterations and "improvements"; but these adverse influences, — themselves perhaps a tribute to the poet's vitality, — were counter-balanced by more practical appreciation. In modern days the critics discuss Shakespeare while the populace herds in the kinema. Many Augustans, though praising Shakespeare's "nature", deplored his lack of "art", but many also agreed with Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare's first

¹⁾ See inter alia, D. Nicholl Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, 1903.

²⁾ See Sir Sidney Lee, *A Life of Shakespeare*, 1915, p. 577.

adequate biographer, who in 1713 in the Prologue to "The Tragedy of Jane Shore" praised Shakespeare for writing romantic plays:

"In such an Age, Immortal Shakespeare wrote
By no quaint Rules, nor hampering Criticks taught,
With rough majestic force he moved the Heart
And Strength and Nature make amends for Art."

The voice of Richard Steele in the ^{prologue} preface of Ambrose Philips' "The Distrest Mother" (1712) was not the voice of one crying in a wilderness of classicism:

"But Shakespear's self transgress'd; and shall each self,
Each Pigmy genius, quote Great Shakespear's Self!
What Critick dares prescribe what's just and fit,
Or mark out limits for such boundless Wit!
Shakespeare could travel thro' Earth, Sea and Air,
And Paint out all the Powers and Wonders there,
In barren Desarts he makes Nature smile,
And gives us feasts in his Enchanted Isle."

If we remember that Spenser must have been read about as much as Dryden, that Shakespeare's romantic plays were thoroughly appreciated and that the number of editions of Milton far exceeded that of the editions of Pope ¹⁾, we are once more reminded of the danger of sweeping statements about the eighteenth century and classical poetry. At one time these were very common and they have not yet quite disappeared. Thus one of the best short handbooks of recent date states: "During the whole of the eighteenth century the classical school of Pope was in the ascendant" ²⁾. We shall endeavour to show that it was not.

¹⁾ The General Catalogue of Printed Books in the British Museum shows that in the course of the century there were at least 36 more or less complete editions of Pope's poetical works.

²⁾ F. Sefton Delmer, English Literature from "Beowulf" to Bernard Shaw. Ninth Edition. Berlin 1921, p. 115.

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CHAPTER III

THE SPENSERIAN STANZA IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES .

Versification itself becomes part of the sentiment of a poem.

Leigh Hunt.

In examining the history of the Spenserian stanza in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is necessary to distinguish between prosodic theory and prosodic practice. Though critical analysis of English prosody can hardly be said to have begun before the appearance of Bysshe's "Art of Poetry" (1702), this stanza was criticised a good deal before, and abundantly during the course of the eighteenth century. But actual experimentation in prosody was on the whole in abeyance. The imitations were mostly too diffident to give the poets much scope for metrical originality. The very numerous critical comments on Spenser occasionally contain observations on the prosodic technique of the Spenserian stanza. But the evidence is extremely miscellaneous and as it is desirable to see the historical cumulation of the criticisms, the various passages of prosodic theory may be chronologically detailed.

Probably the first written comment on the Spenserian stanza was made by Gabriel Harvey, (d. 1630), the man who exercised over Spenser an influence from which the poet shook himself free only with difficulty. In his copy of George Gascoigne's "Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse", (1575) ¹), in which Gas-

¹) This copy is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

coigne deprecates the sacrifice of reason to rhyme or the use of obsolete words, Harvey added the following note to Gascoigne's advice to "hold the just measure wherewith you begin your verse": — "The difference of the last verse from the rest in everie stanza, a grace of the Faerie Queen."

1625. The first printed comment on Spenser's stanza is found in William L'Isle's Prefatory words to the reader, before his translation of *Du Bartas*. L'Isle insists on the necessity of a caesura in the middle of the alexandrine.

"The Bartasian verse (not unlike herein to the Latin Pentameter) hath ever this propertie, to part in the mids betwixt two wordes: so much doe French prints signifie with a stroke interposed.... The neglect of this hath caused many a brave stanza of the Faerie Queene to end but harshly, which might have been prevented at the first; but now the fault may be sooner found than amended."

1628. In Drummond's account of Ben Jonson's "Conversations" we find Ben's opinion that "Spenser's stanzaes pleased him not, nor his matter."

1647. Henry More refers to the musical power of the stanza. In the dedication to his "dear father, Alexander More Esquire", prefixed to his "Philosophical Poems", (1647), he says:

"But to speak modestly you deserve the patronage of better Poems than these, though you may lay a more proper claim to these than any. You having from my childhood tuned mine ears to Spenser's rhymes, entertaining us on winter nights, with that incomparable piece of his, *The Fairy Queen*, a Poem as richly fraught with divine Morality as Phansy."

1651. Sir William Davenant in the Preface to "*Gondibert*":

"The unlucky choice of his stanza hath by repe-

tition of Rime brought him to the necessity of many exploded words."

1667. Woodford in the Preface to "A Paraphrase upon the Psalms of David":

"Mr. Sandys. . . . has us'd greater variety of measures, and such as have by experience been found to be very agreeable to Musick, — the life and spirit of Poesy. In mine will yet appear a greater liberty, both as to the expression and the different sort of stanzas which I have us'd".

Though Woodford tried different variations of the Spenserian stanza in this volume, the Spenserian stanza was not used.

1674. In Rymer's Preface to his translation of Rapin's "Reflections" we find for the first time the idea that Spenser's stanza is "nowise proper for our language". The mistake is due to Ariosto, says Rymer. This theory that the stanza on account of its repetition of rhymes is unfit for the English language, though it may be suitable for Italian, led a vigorous existence for over a century. It is the keynote of eighteenth century criticism of the stanza. The anonymous writer of "Clifton, A Poem, In Imitation of Spenser" (Bristol, 1775) repeats what Rymer had said a century before. In the preface to "Clifton" the author says:

"The quaintness of his expression, the obsoleteness of his terms and the frequent occurrence of his rhymes are very general objections to one of the finest poets that ever lived. But I should pay very little attention to any objections which might be made to this stanza if I had but one ray of his genius to illuminate it, — I am only afraid, that having adopted the one without being in possession of the other, I may be giving a false idea of my original; — and that they who are accustomed to the correct and polished verse of these

days may, from my imperfect imitation, be discouraged from looking into that mine of poetry, that fruitful garden of the imagination — the Fairy Queen of Spenser."

Edward Phillips, Milton's nephew, in his "*Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum*", shows a better appreciation of the stanza:

"How much more stately and majestic in epic poems, especially of heroic argument, Spenser's stanza (which I take to be but an improvement upon Tasso's *Ottava Rima*, or the *Ottava Rima* itself, used by many of our once esteemed poets), is above the way, either of couplet, or alteration of four verses only, I am persuaded were it revived, would soon be acknowledged."

This attitude is exceptional for the days of Dryden, but it was common in the time of Pope.

1679. Samuel Woodford in the preface to his "*Paraphrase upon the Canticles*", says: —

"If therefore Ourselves or the French will use Blank Verse, either in an Heroick Poem, where they should be, I think, Couplets, as in Mr. Cowley's *Davideis* (for the *Quatrains* of Sir William Davenant, and the Stanza of Nine in Spenser's "*Faery Queen*", which are but an improvement of the *Ottava Rima*, to instance in no more, seem not to me so proper), let us give it the Character, as to its Form, which it anciently had...."

1693. Dryden made his most elaborate criticism of Spenser in his "*Essay on Satire*" (1693): Of the diction and stanza he says:

".... for the rest his obsolete language and ill choice of his stanzas, are faults but of the second magnitude; for, notwithstanding the first, he is still intelligible, at least after a little practice: and for

the last, he is the more to be admired, that, labouring under such a difficulty, his verses are so numerous, so various, and harmonious, that only Virgil, whom he professedly imitated, has surpassed him among the Romans; and only Mr. Waller among the English."

1697. A more important reference by Dryden to Spenser's stanza is to be found in the dedication to the translation of the "Aeneis" (1697). Dryden admits that he got his Alexandrines and his triplets from Spenser.

"In the mean time that I may arrogate nothing to myself, I must acknowledge that Virgil in Latin, and Spenser in English, have been my masters. Spenser has also given me the boldness to make use sometimes of his Alexandrine line: which we call, though improperly, the Pindaric, because Mr. Cowley has often employed it in his odes. It adds a certain majesty to the verse, when it is used with judgement and stops the sense from overflowing into another line."

"When I mentioned the Pindaric line, I should have added, that I take another licence in my verses; for I frequently make use of triplet rhymes, and for the same reason, because they bound the sense: and therefore I generally join these two licences together, and make the last verse of the triplet a Pindaric: for, besides the majesty which it gives, it confines the sense within the barriers of three lines, which would languish if it were lengthened into four. Spenser is my example for both these privileges of English verses; and Chapman hath followed him in his translation of Homer."

"They both (i. e. Cowley and Spenser) make hemistichs (or half verses), breaking off in the middle of a line. I confess, there are not many such in the

Fairy Queen: and even those few might be occasioned by the unhappy choice of so long a stanza."

1702. Edward Bysshe in his "Art of English Poetry":

"But this stanza is very difficult to maintain and the unlucky choice of it reduc'd him often to the necessity of making use of many exploded terms, nor has he, I think, been follow'd by any of the Moderns."

1706. Prior in his Ode "adds one verse to his stanza" to make "the number more harmonious".

1714. Samuel Croxall's remarks on the Spenserian stanza show that he had read Prior's Preface to his Ode of 1706. In the preface to his "Another Original Canto of Spenser" (1714) he observes, after praising the "refin'd pen of Spenser": "And perhaps the Ruff and Farthingal, which the Muse is dress'd in (tho' now unfashionable) may set off her natural Graces with a becoming simplicity".

1715. Hughes in his edition of Spenser considers the stanza "defective", but yet admits it is "much more harmonious in its kind than the heroic verse of that age."

"As to the stanza in which the "Faerie Queene" is written, though the author cannot be commended in the choice of it, yet it is much more harmonious in its kind than the heroick verse of that age; it is almost the same with what the Italians call their *ottava rima*, which is used both by Ariosto and Tasso, but improved by Spenser, with the addition of a line more in the close, of the length of our Alexandrines. The defect of it in long or narrative poems is apparent; the same measure, closed always by a full stop, in the same place, by which every stanza is made as it were a distinct paragraph, grows tiresome by continual repetition, and frequently breaks the sense, when it ought to be carried on without interruption. With this exception the reader will, however, find it harmonious, full of well-sounding epithets, and of

such elegant turns on the thought and words, that Dryden himself owned he learned these graces of verse chiefly from our poet."

1718. Prior in the preface to *Solomon, or the Vanity of the World* speaks of blank verse and stanza in general and of Spenser and Milton in particular:

"If striking out into blank verse, as Milton did, (and in this kind Mr. Philips, had he lived, would have excelled) or running the thought into Alternate or Stanza, which allows a greater variety, and still preserves the dignity of the verse, as Spenser and Fairfax have done; if either of these, I say, be a proper remedy for my poetical complaint, or if any other may be found, I dare not determine; I am only enquiring, in order to be better informed.... But once more: he that writes in rhimes dances in fetters, and as his chain is more extended he may certainly take longer steps."

1742. Shenstone in a letter to his friend Graves:

"I think even the metre pretty (though I shall never use it in earnest); and that the last Alexandrine has an extreme majesty."

1748. James Thomson in the "Advertisement" of "The Castle of Indolence":

"And the stile of that Admirable Poet as well as the Measure in which he wrote, are as it were appropriated by custom to all Allegorical Poems writ in our Language."

1751. Robert Lloyd in the preface to *The Progress of Envy* still condemns the stanza, "which is universally condemned for the Redundancy of its correspondent Rhymes." No wonder that Lloyd "improved" Spenser. He wrote his "Progress of Envy" in a nine-line variation, rhyming (a b a b c d c d d)
(- - - - - 5 6)

1755. Yet Lloyd proved himself no mean critic, as the following quotation from the *Connoisseur* for May 8, No. 67, 1755, proves. It may serve as an answer to those who maintain that the eighteenth century did not appreciate the difference between good romantic poetry and intrinsically worthless imitations.

"This, Milton for his plan will choose:
Wherein resembling Milton's muse?
Milton, like thunder, rolls along
In all the majesty of song;
While his low mimics meanly creep,
Not quite awake, nor quite asleep;
Or, if their thunder chance to roll,
'Tis thunder of the mustard bowl.
The stiff expression, phrases strange,
The epithet's preposterous change.
Forc'd numbers, rough and impolite,
Such as the judging ear affright,
Stop in mid verse. Ye mimics vile!
Is't thus you copy Milton's style?
His faults religiously you trace,
But borrow not a single grace.

How few (say, whence can it proceed)?
Who copy Milton, e'er succeed!
But all their labours are in vain:
And wherefore so? — The reason's plain.
Take it for granted, 't is by those
Milton's the model mostly chose,
Who can't write verse, and won't write prose.

Others, who aim at fancy, choose
To woo the gentle Spenser's Muse.
This poet fixes for his theme
An allegory, or a dream;
Fiction and truth together joins
Through a long waste of flimsy lines;
Fondly believes his fancy glows,
And image upon image grows;
Thinks his strong muse takes wond'rous flights,
Whene'er she sings of peerless wights,
Of dens, of palfreys, spells and knights:

Till allegory, Spenser's veil
T'instruct and please in moral tale,
With him's no veil the truth to shroud,
But one impenetrable cloud."

1751. John Upton addresses to West a "Letter concerning a new edition of Spenser's Fairy Queen" in which he enlarges upon the common topic of too much rhyme:

"Whilst I am in this humour of finding fault, let me consider whether Spenser is altogether to blame for that foolish choice (shall I call it?) of his so frequent returning rhyme in a stanza of nine verses. What fetters for neither rhyme nor reason has he voluntarily put on? And many a bad spelling, many a lame thought and expression is he forced to introduce, merely for the sake of a jingling termination. Verse does not consist in that tinkling sound of similar endings, which was brought into Italy by Goths and Huns, but in proper measure and cadence, and both letters and words corresponding to the sense. Milton saw and avoided the rock which Spenser split on; in other respects, Spenser's imagination was greater".

1751. Samuel Johnson in "The Rambler" for Tuesday, May 14, in attacking the Spenserians, has the same charge of the repetition of rhymes, with the usual reference to the Italians, a charge which was echoed three years later by Thomas Warton in his "Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser". It is instructive to find Johnson, the successor of Pope, and Thomas Warton, his detractor, in the same boat. Here there is no divergence between the stoutest defender of the neo-classical school, and the most cogent advocate of the romantic school. We shall give their opinions side by side:

JOHNSON

"The stanza is at once difficult and unpleasing; tiresome to the ear by its uniformity, and to the attention by its length. It was at first formed in imitation of the Italian poets, without due regard to the genius of our language. The Italians have little variety of termination, and were forced to contrive such a stanza as might admit the greatest number of similar rhymes; but our words end with so much diversity, that it is seldom convenient for us to bring more than two of the same sound together. If it be justly observed by Milton, that rhyme obliges poets to express their thoughts in improper terms, these improprieties must always be multiplied, as the difficulty of rhyme is increased by long concatenations."

T. WARTON

"Although Spenser's favourite Chaucer had made use of the *ottava rima*, or stanza of eight lines; yet it seems probable that Spenser was principally induced to adopt it, with the addition of one line, from the practice of Ariosto and Tasso, the most fashionable poets of his age. But Spenser, in chusing this stanza, did not sufficiently consider the genius of the English language which does not easily fall into the frequent repetition of the same termination, a circumstance natural to the Italian, which deals largely in identical cadences.

Besides, it is to be remembered, that Tasso and Ariosto did not embarrass themselves with the necessity of finding out so many similar terminations as Spenser. Their *ottava rima* has only three similar endings, alternately rhyming. The two last lines formed a distinct rhyme. But in Spenser, the second rhyme is repeated four times, and the third three."

Still Thomas Warton sees some good in the stanza:

"Notwithstanding these inconveniences flow from Spenser's measure, it must yet be owned, that some advantages arise from it; and we may venture to affirm, that the fullness and significancy of Spenser's descriptions is often owing to the prolixity of the stanza, and the multitude of his rhymes."

"It is indeed surprising, upon the whole, that Spenser should execute a poem of uncommon length, with so much spirit and ease, laden as he was with so many shackles, and embarrassed with so complicated a *bondage* of *riming*. Nor can I recollect, that he has been so careless as to suffer the same word to be repeated as a rhyme to itself, in more than four or five instances; a fault which, if he had more frequently committed, his manifold beauties of versification would have obliged us to overlook".

1757. William Thompson in "An Hymn to May" says of the stanza:

"A modern writer has, I know, objected against running the verse into alternate and stanza: but Mr. Prior's authority is sufficient for me, who observes that it allows a greater variety, and still preserves the dignity of verse. As I professed myself in this Canto to take Spenser for my model, I chose the stanza; which I think adds both a sweetness and solemnity at the same time to subjects of this rural and flowery nature. The most descriptive of our old Poets have always used it, from Chaucer down to Fairfax, and even long after him. I followed Fletcher's measure in his "Purple Island", a poem, printed at Cambridge in 12 Cantos, in quarto, scarce heard of in this age, yet the best in the allegorical way (next to the "Fairy Queen"), in the English language. The Alexandrine

line, I think, is peculiarly graceful at the end, and is an improvement on Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*."

1766. The words which Beattie wrote to Dr. Blacklock on September 22, 1766, strike a modern note. Indeed, in subject, metre and diction, Beattie had reached an appreciation of Spenser which does not materially differ from that of the nineteenth century. In eighteenth century Spenserism Beattie holds an eminent position on the strength of this. The quotation from Beattie may well be the last, for after fifty-three years the battle was won and Spenser had come into his own.

"I have written 150 lines, and am surprised to find the structure of that complicated stanza so little troublesome. I was always fond of it, for I think it the most harmonious that ever was contrived. It admits of more variety of pause than either the couplet or the alternate rhyme; and it concludes with a pomp and majesty of sound, which, to my ear, is wonderfully delightful. It seems also very well adapted to the genius of our language, which, from its irregularity of inflection and number of monosyllables, abounds in diversified terminations, and, consequently renders our poetry susceptible of an endless variety of legitimate rhymes."

Most of Beattie's contemporaries shared his views and when the first book of "The Minstrel" came out in 1771, it was hailed with rapture, and the poem was in its fourth edition when the second book appeared in 1774.

Beattie certainly was a sound critic. But he lacked the poetic faculty to put his critical theory into practice. His stanzas are Spenserian in metre and rhyme-scheme, but his lines and line-groupings are by no means Spenserian. The harmony of the genuine Spenserian stanza is conspicuous by its absence. There are too many echoes of the heroic couplet and of attempts at the Miltonic

paragraph. It was left to the nineteenth century to discover Spenser's fluent harmony again.

The technique of the Spenserian stanza in the eighteenth century calls for little comment. One point may illustrate this. Croxall's first canto of 1713 contains forty-eight run-on lines in forty-six stanzas. The first forty-six stanzas of "The Faerie Queene" contain seventy run-on lines. The same quantity of verse in "The Castle of Indolence" contains thirty-seven run-on lines, and in Beattie's "Minstrel" thirty-six such lines. In this respect the influence of the eighteenth century couplet was slight. The stability of the number of enjambements is striking. This continued till "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage", Canto I. having thirty-three run-on lines in fifty stanzas, Canto II. fifty-three in fifty stanzas, canto III. a hundred and sixteen in fifty, and Canto IV., a hundred and forty-six in fifty. ¹⁾

The most striking point about the technique of the Spenserian stanza is the fact that the century took great liberties with it. We shall see how Prior tried to improve it. He started the process, and well into the nineteenth century he had followers. Prior's variation was the most popular, but there were many others. All sorts of variations were tried, differing in length and rhyme-scheme. Even when the number of the lines was restricted to nine, the rhyme-scheme was not safe. We shall see that many of these variations are much farther removed from Spenser than the poems in the regular stanza; the use of the stanza involved the use of Spenser's diction and often his allegory too. This was by no means the case with the variations.

What do these alterations and improvements prove? Do they prove that the poets who used a form different from Spenser's, did not really admire him? By no means,

¹⁾ See H. Reschke, *Die Spenserstanze im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Angl. Forschungen. Heft 54. 1918, p. 97.

for many of them praise Spenser in no ordinary terms. Imitation and adaptation was the fashion of the day; to say that the pseudo-Spenserians did not admire Spenser, because they did not adopt his metre, would be as logical as to say that Pope did not admire Homer, because he turned and forced him into neat couplets. The pseudo-Spenserians should be looked upon in the same light as those who imitated and consciously or unconsciously burlesqued other classical English authors. The Augustans parodied not only Chaucer, Spenser and Milton, but nearly all the ancient masters as well. To say that the Augustans of the eighteenth century did not take Spenser seriously, and that he only served as an object of burlesque, is wrong, unless indeed all literary imitation must be regarded as the sincerest form of travesty.

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CHAPTER IV

SPENSERIAN DICTION IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

"Yet, with all its Imperfections, it must be said, that his Diction, is, for the most part, strong, significant and harmonious; and much more sublime and beautiful than that of any English Poet, who had written before him."

JOHN HUGHES in "The Works of Spenser", London 1715, 1750.

Spenser was the first poet who deliberately chose not to write in the language of his time. He created an artificial, a "literary" language, made up partly of old forms from Chaucer, — including not only obsolete words, but also obsolete forms of words still in use — partly of dialect words and partly of "coinages". Many of these archaisms, that now seem to us quite common, were unknown to the ordinary reader of the eighteenth century and had to be explained in glossaries. Thus Hughes in his edition of Spenser of 1715 gives "a glossary explaining the old and obscure words in Spenser's Works", in which over 900 words are explained. That Spenser is much more easily comprehended by us than by the Augustans is clearly proved by this list. It is for this reason that we find such frequent explanations of archaic or obsolete terms given by the eighteenth century Spenserians. When we find such terms explained in footnotes, we may safely assume that the explanation was given not because the edition was designed for an ignorant type of reader, but because such terms appeared distinctly archaic even to a cultivated eighteenth century mind.

In the critical epistle which Spenser's fellow-student Edward Kirke prefixed to "The Shepheardes Calender" (1579), Spenserian diction was discussed for the first time. Kirke placed his friend by the side of Chaucer, and praised the diction:

"....for in my opinion it is one special prayse of many, whych are dew to this Poete, that he hath laboured to restore, as to theyr rightfull heritage, such good and naturall English words, as have ben long time out of use, and almost cleane disherited. Which is the onely cause, that our Mother tonge, which truely of it self is both ful enough for prose, and stately enough for verse, hath long time ben counted most bare and barrein of both."

Spenser's contemporaries agreed with Edward Kirke as regards Spenser's poetic merits, but they were far from extending the same praise to the diction. Sir Philip Sidney's criticism of Spenser's diction is probably the best-known passage of "An Apologie for Poetrie". It was written at some time between 1581 and 1585, but not published until 1595.

"I account the *Mirror of Magistrates* meetly furnished of beautiful parts; and in the Earl of Surrey's *Lyrycs* many things tasting of birth, and worthy of a noble mind. The *Shepherd's Calendar* hath much poetry in his Eglogues: indeed worthy the reading if I be not deceived. That same framing of his style in an old rustic language I dare not allow, sith neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sanazar in Italian, did affect it. Besides these do I not remember to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed that have poetical sinews in them."

Sidney's criticism carried more weight than Kirke's. Edmund Bolton (1574—1627) criticised Spenser's use of "old, outworn words" as being no more "practical Eng-

lish" than Chaucer or Skelton" ¹⁾ and Ben Jonson, though liking Spenser's matter, did not like his manner:

"Spenser, in affecting the Ancients writ no Language. Yet I would have him read for his matter, but as Virgil read Ennius." (Discoveries, 1625—1635?).

Yet in the same work he has a good word to say for archaisms:

"Words borrow'd of Antiquity doe lend a kind of Majesty to style, and are not without their delight sometimes."

In Fuller's "Worthies of England" (1662) there is another reference to Spenser's diction:

"The many Chaucerisms used (for I will not say affected by him) are thought by the ignorant to be blemishes, known by the learned to be beauties to his book; which notwithstanding had been more saleable, if more conformed to our modern language."

But there were people also who took up Kirke's position. There were evidently two opposing camps, for Edward Guilpin, the satirist, remarks in his "Skialetheia", or "A Shadow of Truth in Certain Epigrams and Satyres" (1598):

„Some blame deep Spenser for his grandam words;
Others protest that in them he records
His maister peece of cunning, giving praise
And gravity to his profound-prickt layes."

In 1621 Alexander Gill defended Spenser's diction as follows:

"Verba a vetustate repetita afferunt orationi maiestatem non sine delectatione. Nam et auctoritatem antiquitatis habent; et quia intermissa, gratiam novitati similem parant" ²⁾).

¹⁾ Quoted by R. W. Church in "Spenser" (English Men of Letters), p. 49.

²⁾ Logonomia Anglicana, ed. Ziriczek, p. 107.

From the first Spenser's diction was recognised as a marked characteristic of his style. Davenant says in the Preface to "Gondibert":

"And since we have dar'd to remember those exceptions, which the curious have against them, it will not be expected I should forget what is objected against Spenser, whose obsolete Language we are constrain'd to mention, though it be grown the most vulgar accusation that is laid to his charge."

The numerous references to Spenser from the Restoration to 1700 very often allude to Spenser's "antiquated", "rustic" or "obsolete" words, but there is no attempt to dissociate the stanza from the diction; by admirers and detractors alike it is felt that the two are inseparable. When "A Person of Quality" published in 1687 "Spenser redivivus, containing the first book of The Fairy Queene, his essential design preserved, but his obsolete language and manner of verse totally laid aside", the stanza went the way of the archaisms and the poem was "deliver'd in heroic numbers".

The eighteenth century continued to accept both stanza and diction as being equal and integral elements in Spenser's style. The century called it "Spenser's manner" or "style" and it is noteworthy that all the poems up to Beattie's "The Minstrel" (1771—74) written in the regular stanza of Spenser, reproduced also his archaisms, whereas many of the imitations in irregular stanzas contain none of his archaisms¹⁾. It shows that the eighteenth century felt that there was a distinct difference in kind, not merely in degree, between the genuine and the spurious stanza.

On the theoretical side the case for the archaisms was supported by Dryden in his discussion of Milton in the "Essay on Satire" (1693).

¹⁾ See K. Reuning, Das Altertümliche im Wortschatz der Spenser Nachahmungen des 18. Jahrhunderts. Straszburg, 1912.

"His (Milton's) antiquated words were his choice, not his necessity; for therein he imitated Spenser as Spenser imitated Chaucer. And though, perhaps, the love of their master may have transported both too far, in the frequent use of them; yet, in my opinion, words may then be laudably revived, when either they are more sounding, or more significant, than those in practice; and, when their obscurity is taken away, by joining other words to them which clear the sense, according to the rule of Horace, for the admission of new words. But in both cases a moderation is to be observed in the use of them. For unnecessary coinage, as well as unnecessary revival runs into affectation; a fault to be avoided on either hand."

On the practical side the battle for archaisms derived great assistance from Prior's "Ode, humbly addressed to the Queen, on the Glorious Success of Her Majesty's Arms, 1706. Written in imitation of Spenser's style", — which is the starting-point of Spenserian diction in the eighteenth century. In the Preface Prior says:

"....and avoided such of his words, as I found too obsolete. I have, however, retain'd some few of them, to make the colouring look more like Spenser's. Behest, Command; Band, Army; Prowess, Strength; I weet, I know; I ween, I think; whilom, heretofore; and two or three more of that kind which I hope the ladies will pardon me and not judge my Muse less handsome, though for once she appears in a Farthingal. I have also in Spenser's manner, used Caesar for Emperor, Boya for Bavaria, Bavar for that Prince, Ister for Danube, Iberia for Spain, etc."

The preface is interesting also because Prior draws a comparison between Horace and Spenser.

"Both have equally that agreeable manner of mixing



Clark & Pine Sc. 29.

M^{rs} Prior.

Engraving from G. Jacob's "Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of Our Most Considerable English Poets", 1720.

morality with their story, and that *Curiosa Felicitas* in the choice of their diction, which every writer aims at, and so very few have reached."

Romantic literature often involves the revival of an older literature. If we remember that Spenser's language was considered affected and archaic by many, we can hardly underrate the importance of the fact that Prior ventured to adopt several of Spenser's archaisms in an Ode addressed to the Queen. In this he introduced a fashion which remained. The diction of Prior's Ode was attacked in an anonymous folio poem: "A Modern Inscription to the Duke of Marlborough's Fame. Occasion'd by an Antique in imitation of Spenser." (1706). Here the author rails against Prior's "dull antiquated words".

That Steele really loved Spenser is well-known. In "The Tatler" for July 6, 1710 he wrote:

"I was this morning reading the tenth canto of the fourth book of Spenser, in which Sir Scudamour relates the progress of his courtship of Amoret under a very beautiful allegory, which is one of the most natural and unmixed of any in that most excellent author."

And in "The Spectator" for Nov. 19, 1712 he defended Spenser's diction in the following terms:

"His old words are all true English and Numbers exquisite; and since they are all proper, such a Poem should not (any more than Milton's) subsist all of it of common, ordinary words."

After this semi-official praise it is not to be wondered at that Spenserian diction leapt into full vigour in Croxall. Croxall's first "Canto" (1713) contains 66 Spenserian words in 46 cantos, Shenstone's "Schoolmistress" (1737) contains 40 in 35 stanzas.

The Spenserians were really in love with the antiquated diction. About the year 1741 Shenstone wrote to his

friend Graves: "Those which afford the greatest scope for a ludicrous imitation are his simplicity and obsolete phrases; and yet those are what give one a very singular pleasure in the perusal". The love of Spenser became so great that Samuel Johnson deemed it necessary to take up the cudgels in defence of his own style. Says the doctor:

"His (viz. Spenser's) style was in his own time allowed to be vicious, so darkened with old words and peculiarities of phrase, and so remote from common use that Jonson (i. e. Ben) boldly pronounces him to have written no language" ¹⁾).

A comparison between the three versions of "The Schoolmistress" (1737, 1742, 1764) shows that as the poem increased in length, the diction increased in opulence, until what was at first intended mainly as burlesque became in the third version a conscious and deliberate effort to secure picturesque ornament ²⁾).

In Thomas Warton's copy of Spenser's works (1617) in the British Museum, Kirke's words referring to Spenser's diction are underlined and a marginal note is added: "Spenser's Design is using old words. Vid. Camden's Remains." And to stanza 32 of Canto II. ("Dan Chaucer, Well of English undefiled —") Warton added the following footnote:

"Spenser was of opinion that the Writers of his Time adulterated the Language by several innovations, mixtures of Italian, etc., so that he looked upon the old obsolete tongue as the most pure and true. See this notion further confirmed in E. K.'s Dedication before the Pastorals."

Warton's attitude towards Spenser's diction was rather neutral.

¹⁾ The Rambler, May 14, 1751.

²⁾ See O. Daniel, William Shenstone's Schoolmistress. Berl. Diss. 1908.

William Thompson, though an ardent Spenserian, condemned the antiquated works in theory, but could not help using them in practice. In the preface of "An Hymn to May" (circa 1746), a poem in the seven-line stanza, he said:

"As Spenser is the most descriptive and florid of all our English writers, I attempted to imitate his manner, in the following vernal Poem. I have been very sparing of the antiquated words, which are too frequent in most of the imitations of this author; however, I have introduced a few here and there, which are explained at the bottom of each page where they occur."

Nevertheless the poem contains 51 Spenserian archaisms in 75 stanzas and "The Nativity" by the same author contains in 20 stanzas 30 archaisms. This shows the strength of the tradition.

James Thomson's diction does not call for any special comment, as he followed the practice of his fellow-Spenserians in diction. The archaisms of "The Castle of Indolence" served as a model for Byron's Spenserian diction, since most of Byron's obsolete words are derived from Thomson rather than from Spenser. Byron imitated Spenser's diction in the early stanzas of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" in a spirit of burlesque, just as many of the eighteenth century Spenserians had done. But he soon dropped the diction almost entirely.

The battle over Spenserian diction continued in the second half of the eighteenth century. William Whitehead, who on the death of Colley Cibber in 1757, was appointed poet laureate, expressed a sound appreciation of Milton and Spenser in "A Charge to the Poets, 1762".

"Some hate alle rhyme; some seriously deplore
That Milton wants that one enchantment more.
Tir'd with th'ambiguous tale or antique phrase,

O'er Spenser's happiest paintings, loveliest lays,
Some heedless pass: while some with transport view
Each quaint old word, which scarce Eliza knew,
And, eager as the fancied knights, prepare
The lance, and combat in ideal war
Dragons of lust, and giants of despair.
Why be it so; and what each thinks the best
Let each enjoy: but not condemn the rest."

The type of Spenserian diction remained almost static until the time of Beattie, who was the first to endeavour to imitate Spenser "not in his allegory or antiquated dialect, which though graceful in him, appears sometimes awkward in modern writers, but in the measure and harmony of his verse and in the simplicity and variety of his composition" ¹⁾. Beattie thought he had renounced the diction altogether. When Gray criticised the manuscript of "The Minstrel", which Beattie had sent him, with a request for revision, Gray observed:

"I think we should wholly adopt the language of Spenser's time or wholly renounce it. You say you have done the latter; but, in effect, you retain, *fared, forth, mead, wight, ween, gaude, shene, in sooth, aye, eschew, etc.*".

Though "The Minstrel" contains 31 more or less archaic Spenserian words, yet its author must be admitted to have broken up the integral connection between the genuine Spenserian stanza and the genuine Spenserian diction, a connection which had existed for about 60 years. The later Spenserians used Spenser's diction occasionally, but it was no longer a poetic law. Burns, Campbell and Byron employ the Spenserian stanza independently of the diction, Byron's practice being especially instructive in this respect.

The final extreme may be said to have been reached

¹⁾ Advertisement to "The Minstrel".

by Todd in his edition of Spenser of 1803, where he says:

"In the present edition, the antiquated spelling of the poet is altogether retained. It is sufficient if I may apply to this circumstance the just observation of Dr. Johnson, respecting the diction of Shakespeare "that the words are Spenser's" ¹⁾).

The diction of the neo-classicists lacked colour and imaginative appeal. There is no strangeness, no remoteness, no sense of mystery. It is all clear, precise and brilliant, but not suggestive or picturesque. Contrasted with the neo-classic diction the Spenserian was full of the qualities that go to make romance. Against the pallid vigour, the efficient grace, the hard perfection of Augustan diction, it shone with a certain glamour, a rare and alien charm, a glow of pristine chivalry, the revisiting spirit of an older world that yet had never been.

The use of Spenserian diction was constant in all the genuine Spenserian stanzas written up to 1771, both in the burlesque and in the serious imitations. The best work was all done in Spenser's stanza with the aid of Spenser's diction. This is of great significance. Spenserian diction continued in an unbroken line from Spenser himself down to Beattie. Throughout this long time there were both favourable and unfavourable criticisms of that manner. There was a steadily increasing attention to the romantic aspect of the diction of Spenser from his day down to the end of the eighteenth century, and that interest, that curiosity, continued almost without abatement until at the end of the eighteenth century it rose from latent life into the strange ecstasy of the romantic revival.

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¹⁾ Todd, Edition of Spenser. Preface. page IV.

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"In the England of the age of Elizabeth, what place is filled by the poetry of Spenser? What blank would be made by its disappearance? In what, for each of us who love that poetry, resides its special virtue? Shall we say in answer to these questions that Spenser is the weaver of spells, the creator of illusions, the enchanter of the Elizabethan age; and that his name is to us a word of magic by which we conjure away the pain of actual life, and obtain entrance into a world of faery? Was Spenser, as a poet of our own time names himself, "the idle singer" of his day — that day not indeed "an empty day", but one filled with heroic daring and achievement? While Raleigh was exploring strange streams of the New World, while Drake was chasing the Spaniard, while Bacon was seeking for the principles of a philosophy which should enrich man's life, while Hooker, with the care of a wise master-builder, was laying the foundation of polity in the National Church, where was Spenser? Was he forgetful of England, forgetful of earth, lulled and lying in some bower of fantasy, or moving in a dream among imaginary champions of chivalry, distressed damsels, giants and dragons and satyrs and savage men, or shepherds who pipe and shepherdesses who dance forever in a serene Arcady?"

EDWARD DOWDEN in "Spenser, the Poet and Teacher."

CHAPTER V

ELIZABETHAN SPENSERIAN

The poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who imitated the work of Edmund Spenser are to be divided into Elizabethan and Augustan Spenserians. The Elizabethan Spenserians admired the romantic quality of Spenser, they imitated his sensuous glow; the Augustan Spenserians admired the epic quality of Spenser, they imitated him in a mood of burlesque, which soon changed into a serious spirit. The two schools finally merged into the modern Spenserians, who applied Spenser's stanza in their own way and for their own purposes. Their Spenserian poems are allegorical or burlesque; romantic, social, historical, religious, descriptive and narrative. The last of the Elizabethan Spenserians was William Thompson, whose "Epithalamium on the Royal Nuptials in May, 1736" and "The Nativity: A College Exercise, 1736" were published in 1757. The first of the Augustan Spenserians was Alexander Pope, whose poem "The Alley" was written about the year 1705 and was published in 1727. The two currents were united in the work of Samuel Croxall, who was both a belated Elizabethan romanticist and a neo-classicist. His three Spenserian poems appeared in 1713 and 1714. The first of the modern Spenserians was James Beattie. In "The Minstrel" (1771—74) the author deems "neither the diction nor the allegory an inherent part of the poem"; he will be "either droll or pathetic, descriptive or senti-

mental, tender or satirical, as the humor strikes me.”

Both Elizabethan and Augustan Spenserians admired and employed Spenser's allegory; both tried to vary or “improve” his stanza. The number of poems written in stanzas different from the regular Spenserian stanza, yet owing more or less to it, is surprisingly great. The seventeenth century produced one hundred and thirty such poems by thirty-six different poets¹⁾; the number was even greater in the eighteenth century. How far Spenser's influence went in many of these is hard to say. Some are no doubt genuinely Spenserian in character, others have hardly anything in common with Spenser. For the present purpose it will be best to restrict enquiry mainly to poems written in the genuine Spenserian stanza, since only these are all undoubtedly Spenserian in form and diction. They fully suffice to show that there was no break in Spenser's fame and influence.

The most original and perhaps greatest contribution to English verse-form, the Spenserian stanza, was first used by Edmund Spenser in “The Faerie Queene” (1590, 1596). Spenser's contemporaries recognised him at once as a great poet, comparing him to Homer; yet they did not imitate him much²⁾.

The first poet who used the regular Spenserian stanza after Spenser was Richard Barnefield, a melodious Elizabethan poet. In 1595 he published a short poem of 17

¹⁾ See E. P. Morton, “The Spenserian Stanza before 1700”. *Modern Philology*, Chicago, April 1907, p. 639 ff.

²⁾ See *inter alia* W. Herbert's “A Prophetie of Cadwallader, last King of the Britaines” (1604). The address to king James includes enthusiastic praise of Spenser and Sidney.

In William Camden's “Remains of a Greater Worke” (1605) Spenser is mentioned as the second of great contemporaries: “These may suffice for some Poeticall descriptions of our aunient Poets; if I would come to our time, what a world could I present to you out of Sir Philipp Sidney, Ed. Spencer, Samuel Daniel, Hugh Holland, Ben Jonson, Th. Campion, Mich. Drayton, George Chapman, John Marston, William Shakespeare, and other most pregnant wits of these our times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire” (p. 8).

stanzas, entitled "Cynthia". In the preface he says that the poem is "the first imitation of the verse of that excellent Poet, Maister Spenser, in his Fayrie Queene". The poem is Spenserian both in diction and in allegorical treatment.

The next two imitations date from 1622. In this year Robert Aylet published: "Peace with her foure Gardens", viz. Five Morall Meditations of Concord, Chastitie, Constance, Courtesie, Gravitie". This is a long poem modelled on Spenser in allegory and diction as well as in stanza. In the same year Aylet printed another Spenserian poem: "Thrift's equipage, viz. Five Divine and Morall Meditations of 1. Frugalitie. 2. Providence. 3. Diligence. 4. Labour and Care. 5. Death." There is no reference to Spenser in either of these poems, which is rather the exception than the rule in an early Spenserian imitation. Aylet was no enemy to the couplet; he wrote long poems in end-stopped couplets and heroic stanzas.

The next author whose ear was fine enough to recognise the superiority of the original form ¹⁾ was Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, who in 1642 published a huge poem of over 1000 Spenserian stanzas — the "Psychodia Platonica: or A Platonickall Song of the Soule. By H. M.". It was reprinted in 1647 in More's "Philosophicall Poems". In the dedication to his father prefixed to this work, More ascribes the choice of the stanza to the influence of his father, who had entertained his children on winter nights with that "incomparable piece" *The Faerie Queene*, "a Poem as richly fraught with divine Morality as Phansy." More's diction is a curious mixture of Greek neologisms and Spenserian archaisms.

¹⁾ This does not mean that Milton had no ear for poetry, because he did not use the Spenserian stanza. Milton saw that his powers lay elsewhere. His metrical debt to Spenser is small, however much he may owe to Spenser in other respects.

Sir Richard Fanshawe was a thorough Elizabethan romantic. He translated "Il Pastor Fido", wrote "A Canto" in Spenserian stanzas, and a number of Shakespear-ean sonnets, turned Virgil into Spenser's stanza and diction as well as "The Lusiad" into *ottava rima*. In 1647 came out "Il Pastor Fido, The faithfull Shepherd, A pastoral written in Italian by Baptista Guarini, a Knight of Italie". With the same translation there was published (the pagination is continuous): "Il Pastor Fido, The faithfull Shepherd with an Addition of divers other Poems To His Highness the Prince of Wales (1648)". One of the additional poems is "A Canto of the Progress of Learning". The opening stanza is as follows:

"Tell me O *Muse*, and tell me *Spencers* Ghost,
 What may have bred in knowledge such decay
 Since ancient times that we can hardly boast
 We understand those grounds that they did lay?
 Much I impute to th'shortening of the day,
 (Our life, which was a stride, being shrunk t'a spann)
 Yet sure there are besides some rubbs i'the way
 Say then how Learnings Sunne to shine began?
 And by what darke degree it did go back in man."

The same volume contains many Shakespearean sonnets, breathing a genuine Elizabethan spirit, and also "The Fourth Booke of Vergills Aeneis or the Loves of Dido and Aeneas". This is in Spenserian stanzas and must have helped to strengthen the close connection between the names of Spenser and Virgil, which lasted far into the eighteenth century.

Thirty-one years after his first two attempts, Robert Aylet once more devoted his attention to Spenser's stanza. In 1653¹⁾ appeared "Divine and Moral Speculations in

¹⁾ The title-page bears the date 1654, but this is corrected in the copy in the British Museum and a note is added to the effect that the poem was published Jan. 5, 1653.

Metrical Numbers upon Various Subjects: — By Doctor R. Aylet, one of the Masters of the High Court of Chancery". It contains a paraphrase of "The Song of Songs which was Solomon's." This is in Spenserian stanzas and has all the sensuous warmth of Spenser and some of the carnality of its original. At the head of each "chapter" a synopsis is given in a four-lined stanza, as Spenser had done. This curious mixture of religion and romance has only 41 stanzas. But the same volume contains an immense compilation of 900 Spenserian stanzas, entitled: "The Brides Ornaments". This is full of allegorical personages, representing private virtues. The first stanza of the "proeme" contains a reference to Spenser:

"Whose sublime Wits that in High Court of Fame
Do seek to rank themselves by Poesie,
Eternizing the glory of their name
By praise of Honour and of Chivalry,
To some great Princes Court their youth appllys,
Knights honourable actions to behold;
Chaste Ladies loves, and Nobles courtesie.
Of such have Homer, Virgil, Spencer told,
And have thereby their names in Fames fair Court enroll.

After this Aylet discourses of "Heavenly Love", of "Humility", of "Repentance" and a score of other virtues. In the same volume his two Spenserian works of 1622 were republished. The whole leaves the reader almost breathless with too much virtue.

Eirenaeus Philoletes presented to the world in 1677 a poem called "Ripley Reviv'd" in Spenserian stanzas. The author was probably George Stirk (or Starkey) and if so, the poem must have been written before 1665¹).

The last Spenserian of the seventeenth century was Samuel Woodford. His "Paraphrase Upon the Canticles;

¹) See E. P. Morton, *The Spenserian stanza before 1700*. *Modern Philology* IV, April 1907.

and some Select Hymns of the New and Old Testament" appeared in 1679. In the preface Woodford wrote:

"Among the several other Papers that we have lost of the Excellent and Divine Spenser, one of the happiest Poets that this Nation ever bred (and out of it the world it may be (all things considered) had not his Fellow, excepting only such as were immediately Inspired) I bewail nothing methinks so much, as his Version of the Canticles. For doubtless, in my poor Judgment, never was Man better made for such a work, and the Song itself so directly suited, with his Genius and manner of Poetry (that I mean, wherein he best shews and even excels himself, His Shepherds Kalender, and other occasional Poems, for I cannot yet say the same directly for his Faery Queen design'd for an Heroic Poem) that it could not but from him receive the last Perfection, whereof it was capable out of its Original"

Woodford's remarks are important in the history of Spenser's reputation. They show that he did not feel very confident of the greatness of "The Faerie Queene" as an epic. Now this was precisely what some of Woodford's predecessors and most of his eighteenth century successors did feel. Till far into the next century it was customary to put Virgil and Spenser in the same category. "The Faerie Queene" was regarded by the Augustan-Spenserians as an epic, measured by epic standards, and often found wanting when thus measured.

Woodford's volume of 1679 also contains a long "Epoda", entitled: "The Legend of Love" in three cantos, containing 189 Spenserian stanzas. In the preface Woodford refers to Spenser:

"The Legend further of Love I have stiled it, for honours sake to the great Spenser, whose Stanza of Nine I have used, and who has instituted the six

Books which we have compleat of his Faery Queen, by the several Legends....”

Woodford's Spenserian poem shows the influence of Henry More in its didacticism and of Fanshawe's "The Progress of Learning" in its construction. The diction is only so far genuinely Spenserian that a few archaisms are repeated over and over again.

Woodford continued the sensuous Spenserian manner that had been used by Giles and Phineas Fletcher, by Quarles, Robinson and Joseph Beaumont in their pseudo-Spenserian poems and by Aylet in his "Song of Songs, which was Solomon's". The next Spenserian, Samuel Croxall, wrote in the same spirit. His "Fair Circassian" (1720), though written in couplets, is another paraphrase of the Canticles. It was no doubt influenced by Woodford's and perhaps by Aylet's poems. In "The Fair Circassian" Croxall turned the inconsistent blend of morality, religion and sensuous warmth favoured by his Spenserian predecessors into downright carnality, which gave its author an unpleasant notoriety.

The first eighteenth century poem in the regular Spenserian stanza was published in 1713. It was "An Original Canto of Spencer's Faery Queene, Designed as Part of his Faery Queene, but never Printed. Now made Publick, by Nestor Ironside, Esq." The next year Croxall brought out: "Another Original Canto of Spencer. Design'd as Part of his Faerie Queen, etc."

In a "Preface" to the poem of 1713 Croxall says:

"I am not insensible with what Reason the following Piece of Spencer's will be suspected to be spurious, if a true and fair Account be not first given of it. I am therefore to inform the Reader, that my Great Grandfather, Sir Caleb Ironside was a schoolfellow and intimate Acquaintance of Mr. Spencer's."

Thus Nestor Ironside obtained the Canto and he takes

great pains to prove that it was written by Spenser himself. This provides an interesting example of an early literary forgery. Croxall calls Spenser "England's Arch-Poet"¹⁾ but, says he, "I foresee how ill it will be relished in this Age where the stile will be thought obsolete, and the allegorical way of writing has been so long disus'd."

In the same year, 1714, Croxall published another poem in Spenserian stanzas. It was "An Ode Humbly Inscribed to the King, occasion'd by his Majesty's Most Auspicious Succession and Arrival, written in the Stanza and Measure of Spencer. By Mr. Croxall, Author of the Two Original Cantos, etc.", ("etc." is stated on the title-page). London 1714.

In 1715 Croxall brought out "The Vision, A Poem. By Mr. Croxall, Author of the Two Original Cantos of Spenser." This poem is in heroic couplets. Croxall deserted Spenser and did not return to him again.

The older handbooks used to date the re-introduction of the Spenserian stanza from Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" (1748) or Shenstone's "Schoolmistress" (1737) and Akenside's "Virtuoso" (1737). This myth is not yet exploded. Here is a recent instance: "Thomson's second poem was The Castle of Indolence. It is a return to the stanza, and, in a certain degree, to the spirit of Spenser. It took a bold man, or at least a Scotchman, to venture to admire and imitate Spenser in those days."²⁾ Our list of eighteenth century Spenserians proves that there had been about a dozen of such bold men, most of them Englishmen. As early as 1714 Croxall wrote in the Preface to his Second Canto of "The Passionate Fondness I have for this great man's writings." And Croxall's poems fell

¹⁾ Taken from the title-page of the first collected edition of Spenser's works, 1611.

²⁾ F. Sefton Delmer, *English Literature from "Beowulf" to Bernard Shaw*, ninth ed. Berlin 1921, p. 116.

by no means still-born from the press. A second edition of Canto I appeared in 1714 and even a third edition was called for. In G. Jacob's "Historical Account of the Lives and Writings of Our most Considerable English Poets", etc. (1720) only Pope and Croxall are deemed worthy of the honour of a special portrait.

Much has been written on the Spenserian imitations of the eighteenth century. But although Croxall's Spenserian poems rise in romantic quality as well as quantity above Shenstone's and do not rank very far below James Thomson's, literary historians have, with few exceptions, neglected him. There can be only one explanation of this neglect. Croxall's works were never reprinted in full and some of his poems are now very rare. Professor Phelps evidently could only lay his hands on the 1713 Canto¹⁾, Professor Beers on neither the first nor the second Canto²⁾; Dr. F. Böhme speaks of "die beiden seltenen Drucke"³⁾ and does not refer to Croxall's "Ode"; Herbert E. Cory in his two brilliant monographs on Spenser⁴⁾ does not deal with Croxall's works and criticisms, though most of the other Spenserians come in for detailed discussion. The most easily accessible of Croxall's three Spenserian poems, the 1713 Canto, was reprinted by Dr. K. Reuning⁵⁾, but Croxall's "Ode" is not mentioned by him.

Croxall's position in the history of Spenserism is significant, because he is the link between Elizabethan and

¹⁾ W. L. Phelps, *The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*. Boston 1893, p. 54 note.

²⁾ H. A. Beers, *A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*. New York, 1899, pp. 84, 85.

³⁾ F. Böhme, *Spensers Literarisches Nachleben bis Shelley*. (Palaestra 93), p. 140.

⁴⁾ H. E. Cory, *Spenser, Thomson and Romanticism*. Publ. of the Modern Lang. Ass. of America. Vol. XXVI, No. 1, 1910.

H. E. Cory, *The Critics of Edmund Spenser*. Univ. of California. Publ. in Mod. Phil. Vol. II. No. 2. 1911.

⁵⁾ K. Reuning, *Das Altertümliche im Wortschatz der Spenser Nachahmungen des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Strassburg, 1912.

Augustan Spenserians and because his works, published (and received with acclamation) at the end of the reign of Queen Anne, furnish a further proof that it is erroneous to speak of a "revival" of Spenser, since he had never "died", but was continuously admired and imitated by all who were inspired by the spirit of romance. The next chapter will be devoted to a discussion of Croxall's life and works.

While William Thompson was at Queen's College, Oxford, he wrote two poems in Spenserian stanzas: "Epithalamium on the Royal Nuptials in May, 1736", and "The Nativity. A College Exercise. 1736". These were published in 1757 and are thoroughly Elizabethan in spirit and diction. They reveal a profound study of "The Faerie Queene", "The Shepheardes Calender" and Spenser's minor poems. The first is full of romantic ardour:

"With warmer rapture, and more passionate,
Though hard to be! the royal youth, I trow,
Shall thee embrace: him tenfold fires elate,
And sacred passions in his bosom glow,
Which from thy picture erst began to flow.
For thee he burns, for thee he sighs and prays,
Pours out his soul to thee, nor rest can know,
But dreams of thee long, livelong nights and days,
By beauty led through all Love's rosy-thorny ways".

Thompson's "An Hymn to May" written in "Fletcher's measure in the Purple Island" ¹⁾ abounds in un-Augustan effusions and luxuriance of ideas. But Thompson's Muse had another face as well. To Richard Glover, author of "Leonidas", he addressed an "Epistle", which begins as follows:

"Warm'd with thy verse, which Liberty inspires,
Which Nature forms and sacred Reason fires,
I pour a tributary lay."

¹⁾ Preface to "An Hymn to May".

His allegorical blank verse poem "Sickness" shows a very unromantic study of Milton; in it he invokes the genius of Spenser in the following manner:

"Yet tho' to human sight invisible,
If she, whom I implore, Urania, deign
With euphrasy to purge away the mists
Which, humid, dim the mirror of the mind;
(As Venus gave Aeneas to behold
The angry gods with flame o'erwhelming Troy,
Neptune and Pallas) not in vain, I'll sing
The mystic terrors of the gloomy reign:
And, led by her, with dangerous courage press
Through dreary paths, and haunts, by mortal foot
Rare visited: unless by thee, I ween,
Father of Fancy, of descriptive verse,
And shadowy beings, gentle Edmund, hight
Spenser! the sweetest of the tuneful throng,
Or recent, or of eld. Creative bard,
Thy springs unlock, expand thy fairy scenes,
Thy unexhausted stores of fancy spread,
And with thy images enrich my song.

It would be easy to adduce passages from Thompson's works proving that he was thoroughly romantic or thoroughly classical, merely by selecting certain passages and neglecting others. In Book II of "Sickness" the valley of the Palace of Disease is thus described:

"Here only hemlock, and whatever weeds
Medea gather'd, or Canidia brew'd,
Wet with Avernus' waves, or Pontus yields,
Or Colchos, or Thessalia, taint the winds,
And choke the ground unhallow'd."

But the Palace itself is:

..... "Gothic, rude,
Irreconcil'd in ruinous design".

Thompson, though "having been in early life an admirer of Spenser"¹⁾ and becoming "a studied imitator of that

¹⁾ Chalmers' Works of the English Poets, 1810. Life of W. Thompson, Vol. XV, p. 3.

father of English Poetry", was in full and practical sympathy with the neo-classicism of his day. He is another instance of the danger of labelling men as either classic or romantic.

There are many critical comments in the seventeenth century in praise of Spenser, who, in the title-page of the edition of 1611 (the first collected edition) was styled: "England's Arch-Poet". To give an instance: Drayton's praise of Shakespeare is tame in comparison with his enthusiasm for Spenser. In a collection of his works printed in 1627, containing, *inter alia*, "The Battaile of Agincourt", there is an "Epistle to Henry Reynolds of Poets and Poesie", in which Drayton delivers his judgment upon the merits of various contemporary poets. The following in his reference to Shakespeare:

".... And be it said of thee,
Shakespere thou hadst a smooth, a comicke vain,
Fitting the socke, and in thy natural braine,
As strong conception, and as cleare a rage,
As any one that traffiqu'd with the stage."

But of Spenser he says:

"Grave morrall *Spencer* after these came on
Then whom I am perswaded there was none
Since the blind *Bard* his *Iliads* up did make,
Fitter a taske like that to undertake,
To set down boldly, bravely to invent,
In all high knowledge, surely excellent."

Compared with the praise meted out to Spenser by contemporaries and immediate successors, the amount of unfavourable criticism is small. Spenser was nearly always recognised as one of the greatest poets of his country, but his metre and diction were frequently condemned.

This seems to be the true explanation of Dryden's attitude towards Spenser. Too much has been made of Dry-

den's criticisms on Spenser, which show how even a cultured mind like Dryden's shared the literary bias of a narrow-minded age. It is true that Dryden wrote in the "Essay of Dramatick Poesie" (1667):

"They (the Elizabethans) can produce.... nothing so even sweet, and flowing as Mr. Waller, nothing so majestic, so correct, as Sir John Denham," and in the "Preface Prefixed to the Fables" (1700):

"....that common sense must convince the reader, that equality of numbers in every verse which we call heroick, was either not known or not always practised in Chaucer's age.... We can only say that he lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at first. We must be children before we grow men. There was an Ennius, and in process of time a Lucilius and a Lucretius before Virgil and Horace. Even after Chaucer, there was a Spencer, a Harrington, a Fairfax, before Waller and Denham were in being and our numbers were in their nonage till these appeared."

These criticisms, however, refer to technique only. With regard to the technique of the heroic couplet, Waller and Denham were Spenser's superiors. That Dryden in this connection was thinking of the technique of the heroic couplet appears from the preface to "The Rival Ladies" (1663), where, after saying that the "excellence and dignity of rhyme were never fully known till Mr. Waller taught it", he explains what he understands by "rhyme": "He (i. e. Waller) first made writing easily an art, first showed us to conclude the sense most commonly in the distichs, which in the verse before him runs on for so many lines together that the reader is out of breath to overtake it." And in the "Essay of Dramatick Poesie" Dryden uses "rhyme" and "numbers" as technical terms for the heroic couplet. But as a poet,

Spenser was to Dryden "the author of that immortal poem called *The Fairy Queen*". In the "Dedication to Juvenal" (Essay on Satire) his attitude towards Spenser is fully expressed. Here he criticises Spenser's lack of uniformity, as we do, but puts him above all others as regards sublimity of expression:

.... the English have only to boast of Spenser and Milton, who neither of them wanted either genius or learning, to have been perfect poets; and yet, both of them are liable to many censures. For there is no uniformity in the design of Spenser; he aims at the accomplishment of no one action; he raises up a hero for every one of his adventures; and endows each of them with some particular moral virtue, which renders them all equal, without subordination or performance. Every one is most valiant in his own legend; only we must do them that justice to observe that magnanimity, which in the character of prince Arthur, shines throughout the whole poem; and succours the rest, when they are in distress.... Had he lived to finish his poem, in the six remaining legends, it had certainly been more of a piece; but could not have been perfect, because the model was not true.

....Had I time, I could enlarge on the beautiful turns of words and thoughts; which are as requisite as this, as in heroic poetry itself; of which the satire is undoubtedly a species. With these beautiful turns I confess myself to have been unacquainted, till about twenty years ago, in a conversation which I had with that noble wit of Scotland, sir George Mackenzie; he asked me why I did not imitate in my verses the turns of Mr. Waller and sir John Denham, of which he repeated many to me. I had often

read with pleasure, and with some profit; those two fathers of our English poetry; but had not seriously enough considered those beauties which give the last perfection to their works. Some sprinklings of this kind I had also formerly in my plays; but they were casual, and not designed. But this hint, thus seasonably given me, first made me sensible of my own wants, and brought me afterwards to seek for the supply of them in other English authors. I looked over the darling of my youth, the famous Cowley; there I found, instead of them, the points of wit and quirks of epigram, even in the *Davideis*, an heroic poem, which is of an opposite nature to those puerilities; but no elegant turns either on the word or on the thought. Then I consulted a greater genius (without offence to the manes of that noble author) I mean Milton; but as he endeavours every where to express Homer, whose age had not arrived to that fineness, I found in him a true sublimity, lofty thoughts which were clothed with admirable Grecisms, and ancient words, which he had been digging from the mines of Chaucer and Spenser, and which, with all their rusticity, had somewhat of venerable in them. But I found not there neither that for which I looked. At last I had recourse to his master, Spenser, the author of that immortal poem called *The Fairy Queen*; and there I met with that which I had been looking for so long in vain."

The Elizabethan Spenserians show that Spenser was regarded as England's "Arch-Poet", as the man who, of all poets, had in him most of the poetic spirit, whose luxuriance of ideas, wealth of sentiment, and ardent emotions were worthy of admiration and imitation. Spenser had infused a didactic spirit into his poem. Like Milton, they mostly regarded "our sage and serious poet

Spenser", as a "better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas" ¹⁾ and used Spenser's romanticism to treat of moral, religious and even political subjects. The Elizabethan romantic spirit did not die, either in theory or practice, with the advent of Denham, Waller, Dryden and Pope, but swept on unbroken, till it was reinforced by the new and stronger wave of romance which rose in the eighteenth century.

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¹⁾ Milton's "Areopagitica" (1647).

O for a magic wand some spell to cast
Whereby we might gain entry to the Past,
Bursting the veil of Time, with our own eyes
To see the things of bygone centuries!
That we might, only for one day's brief span,
Perambulate the London of Queen Anne,
And see men as they were! not thro' the haze
That distance or convention overlays —
The splendid Beaux parading in the Mall,
A troop of scarlet Life-guards in Whitehall,
Take boat to Vauxhall Stairs, taste Burton ale,
Therewith the music of the nightingale;
At coffee-house, where wiseacres are met,
Hear oracles expound the day's Gazette!
O might we at our idle fancy range
From Piccadilly to the Royal Exchange!
Pass by St. James, the splendour of the Court,
Then down Pall Mall, of Fashion the resort,
See the Strand's toy-shops and the Fleet's slow tide,
And all the merchandise of broad Cheapside,
Cit, soldier, courtier, tradesman, Templar vain,
Non-juring Priest, Corinna from the Lane,
See them and talk with them! Who would not pay
A year of life to live through such a day?

O. F. CHRISTIE. — England in
the Eighteenth Century

CHAPTER VI

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF SAMUEL CROXALL, D.D.

Samuel Croxall was an abandoned romantic; and not merely that, but essentially one of the romantics of an unromantic time. His vision of Spenser's fairy lands was such as could scarcely cast a spell on a generation tamed by experience of revolution, war and political intrigue, — the three deadliest enemies of the romantic spirit. The fashion in verse had set for the time against the poetry of magic and it was almost in the nature of things that Croxall, as he grew older and lost the exuberance of youth, turned his admiring looks towards the now popular author of "The Rape of the Lock" and followed the prevailing mode.

But the ages of Pope and Johnson did not repudiate the romantic Croxall. As early as 1720 Giles Jacob devoted a page to him and gave his portrait, painted by Bonawitz and engraved by Clark and Pine, in "The Lives and Characters of the Poets".¹⁾ Again, in "The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain" by "Mr. (Theophilus) Cibber and other Hands" (1753) a life of Croxall covers 11 pages. Nicholls, too, in his "Select Collection of Poems" (1781) refers to Croxall's "many excellent poems, which I hope at some future period to find leisure to collect into a volume". Unfortunately Nicholls did not carry his plans into execution. Southey still deemed a portion of Croxall's "Vision" (1715) worthy of reproduction in his "Specimens of the later English Poets." (1807).

¹⁾ See page 77.



Bonawitz pinz.

Clark & Pine Sc. 1719

*The Reverend
Mr. Croxall.*

Samuel Croxall was the son of the Rev. Samuel Croxall, rector of Hanworth, Middlesex, and vicar of Walton-on-Thames, Surrey. He took his B. A. degree in 1711 and we may therefore fix the year of his birth at about 1690. The poet was educated at Eton and St. John's College, Cambridge, where he graduated M. A. in 1717.

He started his poetical career in 1713 with the publication of: "An Original Canto of Spenser: Design'd as Part of his Fairy Queen, but never Printed. Now made Publick by Nestor Ironside, Esq." The titlepage bears the date 1714, but since it was noticed in "The Examiner" of Dec. 1st, 1713, it must have appeared in that year. The young author was perhaps encouraged to translate his deep love of Spenser into verse by Addison's article in "The Guardian" for September 4, 1713, which contains what is probably Addison's most interesting tribute to Spenser:

"I shall in this place only mention those allegories wherein virtues, vices, and human passions, are introduced as real actors. Though this kind of composition was practised by the finest authors among the ancients, our countryman, Spenser, is the last writer of note who has applied himself to it with success.

I was once thinking to have written a whole canto in the spirit of Spenser, and in order to do it, contrived a fable of imaginary persons and characters. I raised it on that common dispute between the comparative perfections and pre-eminence between the two sexes.

Since I have not time to accomplish this work, I shall present my reader with the naked fable, reserving the embellishments of verse and poetry to another opportunity."

That Croxall read "The Guardian" is evident from his pseudonym "Nestor Ironside", this being the name under which "The Guardian" was conducted.

The "Original Canto" made a considerable stir and was much "cried up". About three weeks after publication, "The Examiner" of Dec. 1st, 1713, criticised it as follows:

"It is not my way to make my self either the Publisher or Interpreter of a Whig Author's Works, but that Piece is now freely dispers'd and by being written with a little more Spirit than has for some time appear'd in the Performance of that Party, is gotten into vogue. They all agree to cry it up and tell us the Meaning of it without Reserve.... The Contrivance and Fable of the Poem are Uncouth and Antick enough.... The Diction and Sentiments imitate Spenser even to a degree of Affectation."

Croxall retorted within twenty-four hours. He wrote a pamphlet, dated Dec. 19, 1713, and entitled: "The Examiner Examined in a Letter to the Englishman: Occasion'd by the Examiner of Friday Dec. 18, 1713. Upon the Canto of Spencer. The Second Edition. London. Printed for J. Roberts, in Warwick Lane, 1713." If Croxall's critic had been obliged, though somewhat grudgingly, to admit the popularity of the poem, the author himself modestly rejoices at it as follows:

"About three weeks before (all which time the Examiner took to consider of the matter) there came out a Poem called, *An Original Canto of Spencer, design'd as Part of his Fairy Queen, but never printed; now made publick, by Nestor Ironside, Esq.* This Poem, whoever was the Author, or whatever was the Design of it, was, I think, at least allow'd by every body to be a very just and ingenious Imitation of Spencer's manner of Writing; and it was accordingly very much bought up, read and admired. But out at last comes the Examiner, and criticises this Piece of Poetry, being very jealous of the Praise of an Author, and

willing always was he but as able, to take *even the Life* away of any one that writes better than himself."

In his defence of his work Croxall is a true son of his age. His authority for his Spenserian imitation is Horace, who is quoted to prove that the ancients too had made use of a "State parallel or allegory".

Croxall's prefaces show an intimate knowledge of both "The Faerie Queene" and "The Shepherdes Calender". His first poem proves that if he is not much of a poet, he is at least a fluent versifier.

Stanzas like No. 10 and No. 25 of the 1713 poem may be adduced in illustration:

(10)

As when some purple Flower bedecks the Fields,
With Gold enameld, interwove with Green,
Which through the Air its dewy Odours yields,
Fit to perfume the Bosom of some Queen,
(So fair a Flowre I trow is seldom seen:)
Yet when the blasting Mildew's dreary Bane
With noisom Breath infects the Welkin sheen,
Its coloured leaves no longer then remain,
But droop and fade away and die along the Plain.

(25)

Like as when Phoebus, crowned with Golden Beams
Through mirky clouds that veil the Firmament;
His unresisted Fulgour brightly streams,
And clears the sky with Vapours overhent
So the bright Flames that from her Eyes were sent,
Disspred a radiant Glory all around,
And eas'd the Pain of her sad Captivement,
Who lay with many a sore and bitter stound,
Fast lockt with iron Fetters to the stony Ground.

Such stanzas show that even while writing a political satire on the Earl of Oxford's Administration and on Louis XIV (Archimago), England (Britomart) and Spain (Sir Bourbon), Croxall could not avoid the romantic

manner of his master. The "Original Canto" ran into three editions and its author quickly wrote a sequel. This was: "Another Original Canto of Spencer: Design'd as Part of his Fairy Queen, but never Printed. Now made Publick by Nestor Ironside, Esq. London. 1714." It describes, from a Whig standpoint, the state of England during Queen Anne's reign, the dismissal of Marlborough and the triumph of the Tories. In the preface Croxall wrote that "it must not be expected to come up to the other in the spirit and strength of the Poesy." The public agreed with the author, for the poem was never reprinted.

For all that it contains stanzas which are decidedly above the level of the common Spenserian imitation:

(8)

Down in a deadly Dale, deep, delved low,
Remote from all Access of sunny Ray,
Where kindly-breathing *Zephyrs* never blow,
Nor hapless Mortals bless the rising Day,
The hideous *Beldame's* hateful Dwelling lay:
Yews and black Cypress planted were around,
Before the Door on either side the Way;
Near which a Fount of Blood with groaning sound,
Forth-welling, alway dy'd with purple Flood the Ground.

That Croxall took as background of his Spenserian poem a political conflict is hardly surprising. Spenser too had sought to combine the three elements of romance, moral teaching, and comment on current politics. Sir Kenelme Digby in the "Observations on the 22 Stanza in the 9th Canto of the 2nd Book of Spencer's Faery Queen" (1644) had long before Croxall seized upon the political interpretation of Spenser's allegory. Besides, the age of Queen Anne was the age of the political pamphlet. The political basis of his allegory had not debarred Spenser from a world of mysterious beauty, nor did it prevent Croxall from writing of "vile enchantments", "magick dose", "palmer

old and gray", "paynim country", "ungentle knights", "glittering spear", "crested helm", "sturdy giants", "enslaved wight" and all the romantic paraphernalia of Spenser. Nor is the seriousness but a mask for the smile of the satirist; knights, damsels, giants, dragons and enchanters are all frankly accepted as an integral element of the romantic convention.

In December 1713 Richard Steele published his "Poetical Miscellanies, Consisting of Original Poems and Translations. By the best Hands. 1714". It contains an early draft of Canto IV of Croxall's "Fair Circassian". The anonymous extract is entitled "Solomon's Song" and shows that Croxall had started "The Fair Circassian" several years before it was published. The draft differs considerably from the corresponding part in the poem.

The triumph of the Whigs and the success of "An Original Canto" probably induced Croxall to appear before the public in his own name. On the arrival of George I he published: "An Ode Humbly Inscrib'd to the King, Occasion'd by His Majesty's Most Auspicious Succession and Arrival. Written in the Stanza and Measure of Spenser. By Mr. Croxall, Author of the Two Original Canto's. 1714."

In the Preface to the Earl of Wharton, there is not a word about Spenser, but the first stanza is worth quoting:

Nor cou'd I wish for that fam'd golden Lyre,
Which Orpheus or Amphion tun'd of old,
Or that my breast might glow with Sparks of Fire,
Such as in Spenser's warmer Bosom roll'd
When in sweet Verse, and lofty Numbers bold,
He sung the Glories of Eliza's Reign,
When his auspicious Wings he dar'd unfold
In the fair Flight of an uncommon Strain,
And with his Monarch's Praises charm'd the list'ning Plain.

Croxall's way of flattering "great George" makes the poem far less Spenserian than his first two attempts where

he had a freer hand. On the whole the poem is much more neo-classic than romantic. Spenser's diction, which richly colours the two "Cantos" is almost absent in the "Ode". Instead of pictorial adjectives we find the "stock" epithet. The romantic glamour is gone. There is evidence that Croxall had now read some of Pope's early works. Moreover, the Ode was not published by Roberts, who had issued the two "Cantos", but by Lintot, Pope's publisher, who had already published the "Miscellaneous Poems and Translations, by Several Hands" (1712), in which appeared the first edition of "The Rape of the Lock", as well as "Windsor Forest" (1713), "Ode for Musick" (on St. Cecilia's Day) (1713) and the enlarged edition of the Rape in five cantos (spring 1714).

Croxall was duly rewarded for his laudatory flights of rhetoric. Lintot paid him £ 12.8s. for the Ode ¹⁾, which shows at any rate that the work of a Spenserian had a considerable market value, and he was appointed chaplain-in-ordinary to his Majesty for the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court. Croxall had already taken orders and on October 7th, 1715 he delivered a sermon in St. Paul's. He also preached a sermon on a public occasion ²⁾, in which he was supposed to have attacked Sir Robert Walpole, who had stood in his way to some ecclesiastical preferment. Through the influence of the Court, Croxall was not punished for his boldness, and was not removed from his chaplaincy.

Perhaps to strengthen his position Croxall took up his pen once more in praise of royalty. In the same year, 1715, he published "The Vision", in which royalty in general is complimented in the persons of great English monarchs. "Visions" were much in vogue at the time. Pope published "The Temple of Fame, a Vision" in 1715, Preston presented to the world in the same year: "Aesop at the Bear

¹⁾ Nicholls' Literary Anecdotes, VIII, p. 295.

²⁾ S. Kippis, Biogr. Brit. IV, p. 544.

Gardens, A Vision. In Imitation of the Temple of Fame. By Mr. Pope"; and Lock brought out in 1717: "The Temple of Love, A Vision". In the "Vision" Croxall is more papal than Pope himself. Spenser's method of cataloguing flowers is followed, but there is no trace of romanticism. Chaucer and his "fellow-bard Spenser" are duly praised, but that Croxall was now sitting at the feet of Pope is evident enough. With the desertion of the Spenserian poem for the heroic couplet came the disappearance of the romantic mood.

Sir Samuel Garth enlisted Croxall's services for his edition of "Ovid's Metamorphoses" (1717). Dryden, Addison, Gay and Pope were among the translators. Croxall translated the sixth book and parts of four other books.

"The Fair Circassian, A Dramatic Performance, By a Gentleman-Commoner of Oxford" came out in 1720. Croxall again tried to mystify his readers as to the authorship of the poem. In the preface a supposed Oxford tutor states that the writer died in the course of the previous winter. Yet the poem was soon known to be Croxall's and the eighth edition (1765) is stated to be by "the late Dr. Croxall."

Solomon's Song of Songs, of which "The Fair Circassian" is a free paraphrase, had been versified in English two or three times before. Croxall's paraphrase was very popular. Three years after its first publication the fourth edition came from the press. The lewdness of the poem was generally criticised and it is to be feared that many purchased the poem rather on account of this than for its undoubtedly romantic qualities. Though written in couplets, the poem displays an excess of perfervid emotionality and a too sensuous love of beauty.

In the later editions of "The Fair Circassian" several poems exhibiting various degrees of unromantic sensuality and romantic sensuousness were subjoined, such as "The

Midsummer Wish", "Heathen Priestcraft", "The Naked Truth" (the last two from Ovid), "On Florinda seen while she was bathing" and some poems addressed to "Sylvia",

Croxall's pen continued to be busy. He edited a "Select Collection of Novels" in six volumes. This was a collection of short stories, mostly translated. His chief prose work "Scripture Politics" was published in 1735.

In 1722 was published Croxall's "Fables of Aesop and others", a book which still lives. "It were easy to fill a volume with the vulgarisms and absurdities of Croxall's Aesopian fables. But yet for want of a better, this book, with the help of wooden cuts, has served to entertain children", says Dr. Knox (1752—1821) author of "The Winter Evenings" in No. 51 of the periodical of that name. Dr. Knox was no doubt right; some of the fables offend our modern conception of decency, yet they continued to be popular for a long time.

Croxall's later life was a prosaic success. He obtained many ecclesiastical preferments and died at an advanced age in 1752.

A considerable part of the historic significance that has been ascribed to Shenstone and James Thomson, should be transferred to Samuel Croxall. The romantic quality of his diction and the wealth of pictorial effect displayed in his comparatively popular Spenserian poems show that Spenser claimed enthusiastic devotees even in the days of Queen Anne. Croxall's Spenserian poetry may not have reached the level of Thomson's. Yet it should be borne in mind that he preceded Thomson by thirty-five years. If Croxall succumbed to the popularity of Pope, he had at least shown that he knew how to admire the greatness of romantic poetry, to reproduce it in faint but faithful imitation, and to make it admired by the public.

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"Assuredly it was not thus that a great Englishman of a later age thought of Spenser. When Milton entered upon his manhood, he entered upon a warfare; the peaceful days, days of happy ingathering of varied culture, days of sweet repose amid rural beauty, were past and gone; and he stood with loins girt, prepared for battle in behalf of liberty. And then, in London, when London was a vast arsenal in which weapons were forging for the defence of truth and freedom, Milton in his moment of highest and most masculine ardour, as he wrote his speech on behalf of unlicensed printing, thought of Spenser. It was not as a dreamer that Milton thought of him. Spenser had been a power with himself in youth, when he, "the lady of his college", but such a lady as we read of in "Comus", grew in virginal beauty and virginal strength. He had listened to Spenser's "sage and solemn tunes",

"Of turneys and of trophies hung;
Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear".

And now, in his manhood, when all of life had grown for him so grave, so glorious with heroic effort, Milton looks back and remembers his master, and he remembers him not as an idle singer, not as a dreamer of dreams, but as "our sage and serious Spenser, whom I dare to name a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas".

EDWARD DOWDEN in "Spenser, the Poet and Teacher".

CHAPTER VII

AUGUSTAN SPENSERIAN

The first to give a list of eighteenth century Spenserian imitations was the Rev. Henry John Todd in his magnificent edition of Spenser in eight Volumes ¹⁾. It was published in 1805, was with "gracious permission" dedicated to the king and was reviewed by Sir Walter Scott in the *Edinburgh Review* (1805).

Todd gives a list of thirty-eight Spenserian imitations by twenty-eight poets and seven anonymous writers. Of these, thirty-one poems by twenty-one known authors and seven anonymous writers were published in the eighteenth century. Todd includes the pastoral imitations, though it is very doubtful whether some of these are really imitations of Spenser. Examination of the poems shows that twenty are in the regular nine-line Spenserian stanza.

In 1893 W. L. Phelps gave a list of eighteenth century Spenserian imitations. This list mentions the poems published from 1700 to 1775. An examination of the list shows it contains fifty-one poems by thirty-seven known poets and three anonymous writers. Phelps makes no distinction between poems written in regular Spenserian stanzas and those consisting of stanzas in the more or less modified forms so common in the century. A distinction between the

¹⁾ The works of Edmund Spenser in 8 vols. With the principal illustrations of various commentators. To which are added Notes, etc. by the Rev. Henry John Todd, London 1805. Vol. I, CI, CXXXII.

²⁾ W. L. Phelps — *The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*, Boston, 1893.



Portrait of Spenser from "The Works of Spenser in Six Volumes. With a Glossary Explining the Old and Obscure Words. To which is prefix'd the Life of the Author, and an Essay on Allegorical Poetry, By Mr. Hughes." London, 1715, 1750.

poems in the regular nine-line Spenserian stanza and other forms is, however, inevitable, since only the former were all truly Spenserian in stanza and diction and they alone exercised a lasting influence on nineteenth century poetry. Reference to the poems reveals that twenty-three poems are in the regular stanza, the rest being mostly in the ten-line variation introduced by Prior ¹⁾ or in a variation of six, seven, eight or nine lines.

Reuning ²⁾ uses Phelps's list, remarking (p.1): "Die vollständigste Liste der Spensernachahmungen bietet uns Phelps, und diese wurde unseren Arbeit zu grunde gelegt". Reuning frequently does not state whether a poem is in the regular stanza or not, and, though he is mainly interested in Spenserian archaisms, he does not draw attention to the fact that, whilst among the six-line variations — which can sometimes hardly be called Spenserian — there are few with any archaisms, the poems in the genuine stanza contain, without a single exception, an admixture of conscious archaisms.

Morton ³⁾ states that he has found fifty-seven Spenserian poems by thirty-eight poets and eight anonymous writers in the eighteenth century. Unfortunately Morton does not publish his list. In the course of his article he mentions nineteen poems in the regular Spenserian stanza by name.

The list of eighteenth century poems in the genuine nine-line Spenserian stanza (see Appendix III) has been compiled by examining the complete works of over a hundred eighteenth century poets as well as all the best-known "Collections" and "Miscellanies". As these works may safely be said to represent the bulk of eighteenth century poetry up

¹⁾ Matthew Prior — An Ode Humbly Inscribed of Her Majesty's Arms, 1706. Written in imitation of Spenser's style.

²⁾ Karl Reuning — Das Altertümliche im Wortschatz der Spenser Nachahmungen des 18. Jahrhunderts. Quellen und Forschungen, 116. Strassburg, 1912.

³⁾ E. P. Morton, The Spenserian stanza in the eighteenth century (Modern Philology X 365, January 1913).

to Burns and Crabbe, the list may for practical purposes be said to be complete. It has not been carried beyond Burns.

The starting-point of Augustan Spenserism was Prior's "Ode, Humbly Inscribed to the Queen, on the Glorious Success of Her Majesty's Arms, 1706. Written in Imitation of Spenser's Style". This is a typical Augustan-Spenserian effusion, because Prior's desire for quatrains and couplets made him "improve" the Spenserian stanza, because it contains a theoretical and a practical attempt to reconcile and mix Horace and Spenser and because, in spite of its Spenserian veneer of diction and phrase, it has but little of Spenser's atmosphere and nothing of Spenser's glamour.

Prior states that in his Ode he "only adds one verse to his stanza", to make "the number more harmonious". Prior's stanza consists of two quatrains and a couplet; the rhyme-scheme is ababdcdee, the last line being an alexandrine. This rhyme-scheme is like that of Shakespeare's sonnets with the third quatrain omitted. In choosing this form, which is unlike the Spenserian imitations of Giles and Phineas Fletcher or of Donne, Prior set a fashion. Samuel Say (1744) thinks it "noble" and Prior's poem "the noblest of the Poems" ¹⁾. It was studied throughout the century. In 1794 Anderson could still write in his *Life of Prior*: "It is written in Spenser's stanza and is perhaps the only composition produced by the battle of Ramillies which is now remembered". Morton states that in the course of the century twenty-three poets wrote thirty-four poems in this stanza.

The preface to Prior's Ode contains his defence for combining Horace and Spenser:

"When I first thought of writing upon this occasion, I found the ideas so great and numerous, that I judged them more proper for the warmth of an Ode, than for

¹⁾ See George Saintsbury. *A History of English Prosody*. 1908. Vol. II, p. 545.

any other sort of poetry. I, therefore, set Horace before me for a pattern, and particularly his famous Ode, the fourth of the fourth book, 'Qualem ministrum fulminis alitem', &c. which he wrote in praise of Drusus after his expedition into Germany, and of Augustus upon his happy choice of that general. And in the following poem, though I have endeavoured to imitate all the great strokes of that ode, I have taken the liberty to go off from it, and to add variously, as the subject and my own imagination carried me. As to the style, the choice I made of following the ode in Latin determined me in English to the stanza; and herein it was impossible not to have a mind to follow our great countryman Spenser; which I have done (as well at least as I could) in the manner of my expression, and the turn of my number; having only added one verse to his stanza, which I thought made the number more harmonious.

My two great examples, Horace and Spenser, in many things resemble each other. Both have a height of imagination, and a majesty of expression in describing the sublime; and both know to temper those talents, and sweeten the description, so as to make it lovely as well as pompous. Both have equally that agreeable manner of mixing morality with their story, and that *curiosa felicitas* in the choice of their diction, which every writer aims at, and so very few have reached. Both are particularly fine in their images, and knowing in their numbers."

Here is the truly neo-classical critical attitude: Horace is great, Spenser is great; if you wish to write things that shall last, find the principles or "rules" underlying their works and follow them. Prior was not conscious of any difference in kind between Horace and Spenser; to him both were equally and merely great.

It is interesting to see how Prior put his theory into practice. The two opening stanzas will suffice:

When great Augustus governed ancient Rome,
And sent his conquering bands to foreign wars;
Abroad when dreaded, and beloved at home,
He saw his fame increasing with his years;
Horace, great bard! (so Fate ordained) arose,
And, bold as were his countrymen in fight,
Snatched their fair actions from degrading prose,
And set their battles in eternal light;
High as their trumpets' tune his lyre he strung,
And with his prince's arms he moralized his song.

When bright Eliza ruled Britannia's state,
Widely distributing her high commands,
And boldly wise, and fortunately great,
Freed the glad nations from tyrannic bands;
An equal genius was in Spenser found;
To the high theme he matched his noble lays;
He travelled England o'er on Fairy ground,
In mystic notes to sing his monarch's praise;
Reciting wondrous truths in pleasing dreams,
He decked Eliza's head with Gloriana's beams.

Prior's "Colin's Mistakes. Written in Imitation of Spenser's Style" was printed in 1721 ¹⁾. As in the case of Spenser, Colin is the poet himself:

"As whilom Colin ancient Books had read,
Lays Greek and Roman wou'd he oft rehearse,
And much he lov'd, and much by heart he said
What Father Spenser sung in British Verse.
Who reads that Bard, desires like Him to write
Still fearful of Success, still tempted by Delight."

Spenser is referred to several times and always with great veneration. Yet the poem is thoroughly unromantic and Augustan:

"Daisies and Violets rose, where She had trod;
As Flora kind her Roots and Buds had sorted:

¹⁾ See Prior, *Dialogues of the Dead and Other Works in Prose and Verse*. ed. A. R. Waller, 1907 (p. 80).

And led by Hymen, Wedlock's mystic God,
Ten thousand Loves around the Nymph disported.
Quoth Colin; now I ken the Goddess bright,
.....
.... great Venus she is call'd
When Mantuan Virgil doth her Charms rehearse;
Belphebe is her Name, in gentle Edmund's Verse."

Prior was the first to add to a Spenserian poem the description: "written in imitation of Spenser's style". After perusing Prior's hotchpotch of Horace, Virgil and Spenser, one wonders whether Prior was in earnest. Yet the preface to his "Solomon" (1718) leaves no doubt of the genuineness of his conviction.

Alexander Pope's "The Alley" was written about 1705, but not published till 1727. This short *jeu d'esprit* is important, because it is the first Spenserian poem, which is frankly burlesque. As such it was destined to have a lasting influence, for in the course of the century Spenserian imitations were again and again written "to yield the pleasures of the ludicrous". The poem itself should not be taken seriously. It was the product of a trivial hour with Gay and does not entitle us to conclude that Pope had no genuine admiration for Spenser. Indeed, Pope assured Spence: "There is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in one's old age as it did in one's youth. I read the Fairy Queen, when I was about twelve with infinite delight; and I think it gave me as much when I read it over about a year or two ago."

Mark Akenside's "Virtuoso" (1737) is frankly burlesque in theme and diction. Akenside did not renew this first attempt, though he used Prior's ten-line stanza three times afterwards.

"What Particulars in Spenser were imagin'd most proper for the Author's Imitation on this Occasion, are, his Language, his Simplicity, his manner of Description and a

peculiar Tenderness of Sentiment, visible throughout his Works". Thus William Shenstone, in his advertisement to the second version of "The Schoolmistress" (1742).

Shenstone thought the Spenserian stanza most applicable to a simple theme. This he confirms in his correspondence with his old college friend Graves, where he states: "The true burlesque of Spenser (whose characteristic is simplicity) seems to consist in a simple representation of such things as one laughs to see or to observe one's self, rather than in any monstrous contrast between the thoughts and the works ¹)."

"The Schoolmistress" appeared in three different versions in 1737, 1742, and 1764. The eighteenth century admired it greatly, the nineteenth neglected it shamefully. It was indeed a brilliant performance. Such a combination of humorous tenderness and pathetic burlesque is not easy to match. The tenderness was due to Spenser, according to Shenstone's advertisement; for the burlesque he was indebted to Pope. In a letter written in June 1742 to his friend Graves, Shenstone wrote:

"Pope's Alley made me consider him ludicrously; and in that light, I think, one may read him with pleasure. I am now from trifling and laughing at him, really in love with him."

It has been supposed that Shenstone wrote the first version of "The Schoolmistress" without having seen "The Faerie Queene" ²). Shenstone's words are "some time ago I read Spenser's Fairie Queene and when I had finished, thought it a proper time to make some additions and corrections to my trifling imitations of him, The Schoolmistress." (letter Dec. 24, 1741). But this implies only

¹) Letter to Graves, June 1742 ("Works in verse and prose". 1773).

²) W. L. Phelps. The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement, p. 67: "We see by this that when "The Schoolmistress" was first written, Shenstone knew nothing apparently of Spenser".

that, when he had *finished* "The Faerie Queene" — which is by no means a short poem — he made some additions. It does not exclude the possibility of his having written a first draft (published in 1737 in *Verses upon various occasions, written for the entertainment of the author, etc.*) after having read *part* of the Faerie Queene. That this was the case is proved by what he wrote in June 1742: "When I bought him first I read a page or two of the Fairie Queene and cared not to proceed" (letter June 1742). If Shenstone had not read "The Faerie Queene" in 1737, it is difficult to imagine whence he derived his diction. There can be little doubt that Shenstone read Spenser while at Oxford and that the music of the stanza had lingered in his ear. Though the first draft is based on Pope's *Alley*, the diction and sentiment are much more Spenserian.

The next seven Spenserian imitations on our list are not of great importance. Yet the fact that four or five of them occurred in Dodsley's *Collection* and were therefore frequently reprinted up to the year 1775, is significant.

A word must be said about Christopher Pitt's "Imitation of Spenser", probably published in 1747, because this short poem of six stanzas reveals an attitude towards Spenser which was not uncommon in those days. It is a coarse, obscene burlesque rather worse than Pope's "Alley", on which it is modelled, But we should be careful, in making general statements about the influence of Spenser in the eighteenth century, not to make too much of the fact that the Rev. Christopher Pitt, M. A. thought the Spenserian stanza good enough for this panegyric of the "Jordan". For the Augustans did occasionally burlesque their masters, both ancient and modern. To give another example: John Philips' life and works prove that he yielded to none in his worship of Milton; yet he burlesqued Milton with a pungency rather sharper than that wherewith Pope and Shenstone parodied Spenser when he wrote: "A Poem on the

Memorable Fall of Chloe's P-s Pot, Attempted in Blank verse, 1713."

"The Castle of Indolence. An Allegorical Poem" appeared in 1748. Its author, James Thomson had, what his predecessors in the imitation of Spenser lacked, genius. But this should not induce us to confine our interest to Thomson and to neglect his fellow-Spenserians, because they have fallen into comparative oblivion. The mistake of writers on eighteenth century poetry has often been to say too much of "The Castle of Indolence" and too little of the rest, thus losing the true historical perspective.

"The Castle of Indolence" is a poem conceived wholly in the spirit of the Augustan-Spenserians. It is uncritical to regard the poem as the dawn of modern romance. That is true only to the extent that the poem certainly reveals a new romantic element. But there is nothing in Thomson of the rebel and no small part of the merit of the poem lies in its undoubtedly Augustan qualities.

Thomson began the poem about ten years before it was published. It was started as a gentle satire on his friends, who taunted him with his indolence. The following description of Murdoch, Thomson's biographer, is almost as good as the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*; but it is not romantic: —

"Full oft by holy feet our ground was trod;
Of clerks good plenty here you mote espy.
A little, round, fat, oily man of God
Was one I chiefly mark'd among the fry:
He had a roguish twinkle in his eye,
And shone all glittering with ungodly dew,
If a tight damsel chaunced to trippen by;
Which when observed, he shrunk into his mew,
And straight would recollect his piety anew."

Side by side with the satire we find another Augustan trait, — moral allegory; personified Industry must triumph

over personified Indolence. The second canto contains many excellent moralisings, dear to the eighteenth century mind:

He liked the soil, he liked the clement skies,
He liked the verdant hills and flowery plains:
"Be this my great, my chosen isle," he cries,
"This, whilst my labours Liberty sustains,
This queen of ocean all assault disdains,"
Nor liked he less the genius of the land,
To freedom apt and persevering pains,
Mild to obey, and generous to command,
Temper'd by forming Heaven with kindest, firmest hand.

Thirdly there is the burlesque. It is important to note that Thomson still believes that there must be an element of the ludicrous. The "advertisement" is worth quoting:

"This poem being writ in the manner of Spenser, the obsolete words, and a simplicity of diction in some of the lines, which borders on the ludicrous, were necessary to make the imitation more perfect. And the style of that admirable poet, as well as the measure in which he wrote, are, as it were, appropriated by custom to all allegorical poems writ in our language; just as in French, the style of Marot, who lived under Francis the First, has been used in tales, and familiar epistles, by the politest writers of the age of Louis the Fourteenth."

The pedigree of the poem is clearly shown. Pope and Shenstone were grandfather and father of Thomson's inspiration; Spenser must be burlesqued because Pope had done so; Shenstone's desire for simplicity must be borne in mind. Yet the spirit of burlesque does not detract one jot from the merits of the poem; take the last stanza:

E'en so through Brentford town, a town of mud,
A herd of bristly swine is prick'd along;
The filthy beasts, that never chew the cud,
Still grunt, and squeak, and sing their troublous song,
And oft they plunge themselves the mire among:

But aye the ruthless driver goads them on,
And aye of barking dogs the bitter throng
Makes them renew their unmelodious moan;
Ne ever find they rest from their unresting fone.

This is neither Spenser nor Keats, but it is admirable in its way nevertheless.

Like his fellow-Spenserians Thomson knew how to reconcile the acceptance of contemporary ideals with reverence for Spenser, who was his fountain-head of poetry. In Cibber's "Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland" (1753) we are told that Thomson "often said that if he had anything excellent in poetry, he owed it to the inspiration he first received from reading the Fairie Queene in the very early part of his life." The pensive beauty, the warmth and luxuriance, the atmosphere of languor that is suffused over the poem, — all these come straight from Spenser.

There is one passage in the poem with which every student of the romantic tradition is familiar:

"As when a shepherd of the Hebrid-Isles,
Placed far amid the melancholy main,
(Whether it be lone Fancy him beguiles;
Or that ærial beings sometimes deign
To stand embodied, to our senses plain),
Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
The whilst in ocean Phoebus dips his wain,
A vast assembly moving to and fro;
Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show."

Here we have the first promise of a new element in the development of modern romanticism, a promise which was to find its culminating fulfilment in such a spirit as inspired what are probably Keats' most typically romantic lines:

"The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

This adumbration of imaginative vignettes of a world

beyond the material world, this doubt of the reality of tangible things, this haunting glimpse of a remote and ethereal beauty, is an element which romantic poetry had not known before.

The lines laid down by Croxall, Pope, Shenstone and Thomson were followed with more or less success during the next twenty years by various poets (see Appendix III), but no new element was added till the appearance of James Beattie's "The Minstrel" (1771—1774):

Of the various Spenserian poems published between 1750 and 1771 only Wilkie's "A Dream, in the manner of Spenser" deserves mention. It was published in 1757 in Ralph's Miscellany. Some of its eighteen stanzas are not without merit. They show that the author of that truly neo-classical poem "The Epigoniad" could affect the romantic manner as well:

Upon the ground my listless limbs I laid,
Lulled by the murmur of the passing stream
Till sleep, soft stealing, did my eyes invade
And waking thoughts soon ended in a dream.

Although Wilkie's theme is: "That poets are to blame, when they submit to critics' tyranny", this fairly late Spenserian is of opinion that, though Shakespeare and Spenser were "filled with Nature's sacred fire", yet they lacked art:

Nor are your tales, I wot, so loosely yok'd
As those which Colin Clout did tell before;
Nor with description crowded so, and chok'd
Which, thinly spread, will always please the more.
Colin, I wot, was rich in Nature's store
More rich than you, had more than he could use
But mad Orlando taught him his bad lore;
Whose flights, at random, oft misled his muse
To follow such a guide, few prudent men would choose.

Wilkie prefers Pope to Spenser. In the preface to his

"Epigoniad" (second edition, 1759), the "Scottish Homer" says: "With what favour, for instance, has Mr. Pope's translation of the Iliad been received by persons of all conditions, and how much is it commonly preferred to 'The Fairy Queen', a poem formed upon manners of a much more modern cast."

Wilkie is another example of the danger of classifying the eighteenth century poets into "romantic" and "classic" poets. Those who hold a brief for romanticism, claim him, because he was a Spenserian, but the bulk of his poetry would certainly rank him with the most uncompromising of neo-classicists.

The poets before Beattie used the stanza as Spenser had used it, either seriously or in a spirit of burlesque. Beattie was the first to apply the stanza in his own way and for his own purposes in "The Minstrel" (1771—1774). He was conscious of this from the first. In 1766 he wrote to Dr. Blacklock: "Not long ago I began a poem in the style and stanza of Spenser, in which I proposed to give full scope to my inclination, and be either droll or pathetic, descriptive or sentimental, tender or satirical, as the humor strikes me; for, if I mistake not, the manner which I have adopted admits equally of all these kinds of composition". In his preface Beattie says:

"I have endeavoured to imitate Spenser in the measure of his verse, and in the harmony, simplicity, and variety of his composition. Antique expressions I have avoided; admitting, however, some old words, where they seemed to suit the subject: but I hope none will be found that are now obsolete, or in any degree not intelligible to a reader of English poetry. To those, who may be disposed to ask, what could induce me to write in so difficult a measure, I can only answer, that it pleases my ear."

The result is a poem Spenserian in form but not

in diction, which the author does not see to be an inherent and inseparable element in the Spenserian tradition. Indeed, the stanza is adopted only because of its unusual powers and because it is adaptable to various kinds of poetry. We may say that with "The Minstrel" the theory of Spenserism has reached its nineteenth century level.

Sir Richard Blackmore, the physician-poet, author of:

"Heroic poems, without number,
Long, lifeless, leaden, lulling number" ¹⁾

characteristically summed up the attitude of the Augustans towards Spenser in his "Advice to the Poets" (1706):

"Let them appointed to adorn the Song,
Be bold with Care, with Delicacy strong.
Let *Mantuan* Judgement, and *Horatian* Words
And all the noble Fire which Greece affords,
With all the Beauties which in Spencer shine,
To form their Diction's Dignity, combine;
Let all the Charms of Sound, and Strength of Sense,
Let all the Pride and Force of Eloquence,
Let all the bold, and beauteous Images,
Which by their Master-strokes amaze and Please,
The finest Forms of all the airy Train,
With which the brightest Fancy fills the Brain,
Let Gilding and Poetic Painting, grace
The Roofs and Rooms of all the Stately Case."

To the Augustan-Spenserians Spenser was in the first place an epic poet. As such he was worthy to be placed by the side of the greatest. He was to them no dawn of a new world, no renaissance of wonder.

The taste for pastoral poetry had continued since the Elizabethian imitations of Theocritus and Mantuan down to the reign of Queen Anne. But Spenser's influence on the eclogue was slight. Thus "knowing" Walsh, who published his "Pastoral Eclogues" in 1699, discusses pastoral poetry at some length in his preface, but does not mention Spenser,

¹⁾ Robert Lloyd—"On Rhyme": Chalmers' English Poets, Vol. XV, p. 127.

though he devotes considerable space to Theocritus and Virgil. And in his long "Preface to the Pastorals, with a short defence of Vergil", etc., prefixed to Dryden's translation of Virgil's "Pastorals" (1697), Walsh does not refer to Spenser either.

Ambrose Philips' "Pastorals" appeared in 1709 in the sixth part of Tonson's "Poetical Miscellanies". They were the first poems in the volume, Pope's "Pastorals" being the last. In Philips' "Pastorals" great importance is attached to Spenser's poetry. Though written in couplets and showing characteristics of the age, the preface and the poem prove that Philips had studied Spenser and that, unlike the urban "pastoral" poet of the age, he did really prefer the country to the town.

In the preface he says:

"It is somewhat strange to conceive, in an age so addicted to the Muses, how pastoral Poetry comes to be never so much as thought upon; considering especially that it is of the greatest antiquity, and hath ever been accounted the foremost among the smallest poems of dignity. Vergil and Spenser made use of it as a prelude to Epic Poetry, but I fear the innocency of the subject makes it so little inviting....

"There is no kind of poetry, if happily executed but gives delight, and herein may the Pastoral boast after a peculiar manner, for, as in painting, so in poetry, the country affords not only the most delightful scenes and prospects, but likewise the most pleasing images of life".

"Theocritus, Vergil, and Spenser, are the only poets who seem to have hit upon the true nature of pastoral compositions, so that it will be sufficient praise for me, if I have not altogether failed in my attempt".

Spenser's influence is clearly shown in diction, theme,

and in the choice of proper names. He is praised without stint:

"And Spenser, when amid the rural throng
He carol'd sweet and graz'd along the flood
Of gentle Thames, made every sounding wood
With good Eliza's name to ring around."

Pope is very substantially indebted to Spenser. He grouped his eclogues according to seasons in imitation of Spenser's arrangement by months. There are many phrasal echoes of and modellings after Spenser and in the first draft of the Preface to his "Pastorals" (from which Thomson took the first hint of "The Seasons") he wrote:

"Looking upon Spenser as the Father of the English pastoral I thought myself unworthy to be esteemed even the meanest of his sons, unless I bore some resemblance of him. But as it happens with degenerate offspring, not only to recede from the virtues, but to dwindle from the bulk of their ancestors, so I have copied Spenser in miniature and reduced his twelve months into four seasons."

This was suppressed in the first edition of 1709. Here Spenser is criticised as follows:

"Among the moderns, their success has been greatest who have most endeavoured to make these ancients their pattern. The most considerable Genius appears in the famous Tasso, and our Spenser. Spenser's Calendar, in Mr. Dryden's opinion is the most complete work of this kind which any Nation has produced ever since the time of Vergil."

Philips' Pastorals were exceedingly popular. It was probably Thomas Tickell who was inspired by them to write a series of essays upon pastoral poetry in "The Guardian" for 1713 (Nos. 22, 23, 28, 30, 32). Pope is only mentioned in passing; but the true principles of pastoral

poetry, he urges, are those underlying the pastorals of Philips, who is a second Spenser:

"It is easy to observe that these rules are drawn from what our countrymen Spenser and Philips have performed in this way". (No. 30, April 15, 1713).

„Amyntas and Amaryllis lived a long and happy life, and governed the vales of Arcadia, their generation was very long-lived, there having been but four descents in above two thousand years. His heir was called Theocritus, who left his dominions to Virgil; Virgil left his to his son Spenser; and Spenser was succeeded by his eldest-born Philips." (No. 32, April 17, 1713).

Pope's famous revenge on Tickell and Ambrose Philips is one of the stock anecdotes of literary history. Pope sent to "The Guardian" an essay which is pretended to have been written by the same hand as the other essays. All the worst passages of Philips are quoted by the side of Pope's best lines, after which, Philips is abundantly praised. As an example of Philips' "beautiful rusticity" and "simplicity of diction", Pope quotes:

"O woeful day! O day of woe, quoth he,
And woeful I, who live the day to see."

Pope on the other hand is accused of "deviating into downright poetry".

This glorious piece of ridicule had important results. It not only led to the writing of Gay's "The Shepherd's Week", but it pulled down Spenser as well as Philips and finally killed the Spenserian pastoral. Spenser's proper names, his rusticity, his archaisms and mistakes were ridiculed not wisely but too well.

Though Gay's pastorals were written at the instigation of Pope with the avowed purpose of burlesquing Ambrose Philips's "Pastorals", yet Gay's interest in the subject-

matter, in folk-lore, popular superstitions and rural scenery, made them the best bucolics of the century. Pastoral poetry in the manner of Spenser suffered severely at the hands of Gay in his "Proeme to the Gentle Reader".

"As I have mentioned maister Spenser, soothly I must acknowledge him a bard of sweetest memorial. Yet hath his shepherd's boy at some times raised his rustic reeds to rhimes more rumbling than rural....

"What liketh me best, are his names, indeed right simple and meet for the country, such as Lobbin, Cuddy, Hobbinol, Diggon and others, some of which I have made bold to borrow.... Yet further, of many of Spenser's eclogues it may be observed, though months they be called, of the said months therein nothing is specified, wherein I have also esteemed him worthy mine imitation".

All this nipped the Spenserian pastoral in the bud. William Congreve who, at the death of Queen Anne, imitated Spenser in "The mourning Muse of Alexis" (1714); Elijah Fenton, who was led by Spenser's "Astrophel" to write "Florellio, A Pastoral Lamenting the Death of the Late Marquis of Blandford" (1717); Allan Ramsay in "The Gentle Shepherd, a Scots Pastoral Comedy" with its motto from Spenser (1725); Isaac Browne in his "Piscatory Eclogues" (1729) and Thomas Warton in his short "Pastoral in the Manner of Spenser" (1752) and a few others who imitated Spenser; — not all these attempts combined could give new life and growth to the Spenserian pastoral. With the exception of Allan Ramsay's work, these pastorals were utterly devoid of merit. It seems, indeed, that the Spenserian pastoral was merely tried out of deference to Spenser and not from any vital impulse.

A highly remarkable Spenserian imitation was published in 1713. It was entitled: "A Protestant Memorial or, The Shepherd's Tale of the Powder Plott. A poem in Spenser's

Style, Written by the Right Reverend Dr. William Bedell, Lord Bishop of Kilmore in Ireland. Published from an original Manuscript, found among the Papers of the late Dr. Dillingham, Master of Emmanuel College and Cambridge. To which is prefixed an Extract of the Author's Life, written by Gilbert, Lord Bishop of Sarum" ¹⁾). It tells in the form of a pastoral conversation between Thenot, Willy and Perkin, the story of the gunpowder plot. The poem is written in a metre not unlike that of Coleridge's "Christabel". The lines have four stresses, whilst the majority consist of nine or ten syllables. They rhyme in couplets and must have been inspired by Spenser's four-foot couplets of the second and ninth eclogue of "The Shepheardes Calender". They make an interesting metrical link between the "Calender" and "Christabel".

The poem must have been known already during Bedell's lifetime (1571—1642), because his friend Joseph Hall (1574—1656) wrote some lines on Bedell's poem "A Protestant Memorial".

Another impulse that helped to shape the destinies of the Spenserian pastoral was the new fascination of the East, since it turned pastoral energy into a different channel. The vogue of the East began in 1704 with the first European version of "The Arabian Nights". It was the work of Antoine Gallard, Professor of Arabic at the College of France. From his version the English translations of the eighteenth century are taken.

The influence of the Arabian Nights was heightened by Addison's remarks in "The Spectator" for April 27, 1711 (No. 50). This essay was written at the request of

¹⁾ The copy in the British Museum bears the signature of E. Malone and the following Note in the same hand, signed E. M. "This poem is so extremely rare that I have never seen but this copy and one in the Bodleian Library. A manuscript copy (but not the Author's) is still in that Library. The words "A Protestant Memorial" were not in the original title-page. They were added on the publication in 1712 (sic) I believe by Dr. Rawlinson, who I think was the editor. E. M."

Swift. It contained a letter supposed to have been written by one of the "four Indian Kings", who "were in this country about a Twelvemonth ago". In this prologue of Montesquieu's "Lettres Persanes" (1721) English customs and institutions are ridiculed in a fashion which afterwards was adopted by Lyttelton in his "Letters from a Persian in England to his Friend at Ispahan" (1755) as well as by Goldsmith and Walpole.

A well-known example of the blending of the pastoral and Oriental conventions is Collins' "Persian Eclogues and Odes", first printed in 1742 and reprinted in 1759 as "Oriental Eclogues". The attempt was not very successful, for, as he himself admitted ¹⁾, there is but little of the true Oriental spirit in them.

So far as the pastoral is concerned we may conclude that Spenserianism was tried but found wanting; it was perhaps a bloom too exotic to survive in the atmosphere of the eighteenth century.

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¹⁾ Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Life of Collins: "He was visited at Chichester, in his last illness, by his learned friends, Dr. Warton and his brother, to whom he spoke with disapprobation of his *Oriental Eclogues*, as not sufficiently expressive of Asiatic manners, and called them his *Irish eclogues*".

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O Mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,
O skilled to sing of time or eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starred from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrëan,
Rings to the roar of an angel onset —
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even. .

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

CHAPTER VIII

MILTON'S METRE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The battle between blank verse and heroic couplet lasted throughout the eighteenth century. It started with the early popularity of John Philips (1676—1709); it was not yet decided in the days of William Hayley (1745—1820) and Erasmus Darwin (1731—1802). Hayley wrote lives of Milton and Cowper. He was the patron of Blake and the friend of Southey. His tastes were so wildly romantic as occasionally to expose him to ridicule. Yet he wrote his chief work "The Triumphs of Peace" (1781), which ran into fourteen editions, in heroic couplets. Erasmus Darwin, the Lichfield doctor and rival dictator of the Lichfield lexicographer, moulded his exceedingly popular "Botanic Garden" (1789—92) in neat couplets. Like Hayley he regarded "The Rape of the Lock" as the one supreme poem and adopted the Rosicrucian doctrine of the spirits of the four elements. The couplet-teers, aided by Pope's genius and Johnson's weight, waged a long struggle against the verse of "Paradise Lost". Between the extremists there was a considerable party of moderate and sensible men who recognised the merits of both metres.

Before examining the treatment of Miltonic blank verse by the eighteenth century, it may be as well to reprint Milton's reason for adopting the rhymeless line. The following note is prefixed to "Paradise Lost":

"The measure is English heroic verse without

rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin — rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced, indeed, since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause therefore, some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rime both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings — a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect then of rime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered in heroic poem from the trouble-some and modern bondage of riming.”

The first poem that can claim the dignity of emulating Milton, the Earl of Roscommon's Translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* (1680), derives its chief interest from the motive which impelled the author to adopt blank verse. In an introductory note he says:

“But with all the respect due to the name of Ben Johnson, to which no man pays more veneration, than I, it cannot be denied that the constraint of rhyme and a literal translation (to which Horace

in this book declares himself an enemy) has made him want a comment in many places”.

Roscommon chose blank verse for the sake of liberty and because his “chief care” was “to write intelligibly”. Of any influence of Milton’s blank verse no trace is to be found. Indeed, the rhythmic structure suggests nothing so much as that of unrhymed heroic couplets. Probably Roscommon simply reverted to the primitive type of the regular rhymeless pentameter of five iambs, just as Surrey as well as Sackville and Norton had done, with the same wooden result.

In 1684 Roscommon once more vindicated the rights of blank verse. His “Essay on Translated Verse” won the favour of the many and the eulogy of Dryden, Addison and Pope. It is in heroic couplets, which conclude: —

“Of many faults, rhyme is (perhaps) the cause;
Too strict to rhyme, we slight more useful laws,
.....
But now that Phoebus and the sacred Nine,
With all their beams on our blest island shine,
Why should not we their ancient rights restore,
And be, what Rome or Athens were before?”

Immediately after, there was added in the second edition of 1685 what the author calls in the note: “An essay on blank verse, out of *Paradise Lost*, B. VI.” This is an odd paraphrase of part of Book VI of “*Paradise Lost*”. It shows at least a profound reverence for that epic. The “Essay on Translated Verse” ends with a pious aspiration:

“O may I live to hail the glorious day,
And ring loud paeans through the crowded way,
When in triumphant state the British Muse
True to herself shall barbarous aid refuse,
And in the Roman Majesty appear,
Which none know better, and none come so near.

Walter Pope’s “The Wish” (1697) and “Fables done

into Measured Prose" (1698) were the next poems in blank verse. As the second title suggests, it is blank verse of a very rigid type.

"The Splendid Shilling" (1701—5) and "Bleinheim" (1705) show an immense advance in the right direction. We are still far from Milton, but we are on the right road. There are, at any rate, most of the formal characteristics of Milton's verse. Apostrophisation (th' events, th' encroaching, th' enrolled) is frequent; there are practically no redundant syllables; the sense is "variously drawn out from one verse into another", and there are hardly any trisyllabic feet. But though there is a division into paragraphs, of Milton's unique verse-texture there is no evidence. They show, however, in one respect a considerable advance upon Addison's "Milton's Style Imitated in a Translation of a Part of the Third Aeneid", (1704), — namely, that there are at least occasional single lines which sound almost Miltonic, which is more than can be said of Addison's attempt.

Prior's three blank verse poems must have been written before 1721, but were published only in 1907. In them we find for the first time the practice, which became so common later on, viz. of arranging frequent and abrupt stops in the middle of the line, an unsuccessful attempt to imitate the famous caesura of Milton. The number of feminine endings is far greater than in Milton, where they are comparatively rare.

In 1709 Edmund Smith published an elegiac "Poem to the Memory of Mr. John Philips", his friend and fellow-collegian. The poem was quite popular. It is remarkable for its attack on rhyme:

Oh might I paint him in Miltonian verse,
With strains like those he sung on Glo'ster's herse,
But with the meaner tribe I'm forc'd to chime,
And, wanting strength to rise, descend to rhyme.

.....
 Rise, rise Roscommon, see the Blenheim Muse
 The dull constraint of monkish rhyme refuse.

.....
 Tyrannic rhyme, that cramps to equal chime
 The gay, the soft, the florid, and sublime.

.....
 And Dryden oft in rhyme his weakness hides,

.....
 You ne'er with jingling words deceive the ear,
 And yet, on humble subjects, great appear.

The poem is modern in its praise of Milton and Spenser and its denunciations of the coffee-house bards.

Elijah Fenton's "The Eleventh Book of Homer's Odyssey, In Milton's Style" (1717), is notable for the broken character of its blank verse, the caesura falling with great regularity after the second or third foot.

The most important date in the history of the progress of Miltonic blank verse in the eighteenth century is without doubt that of the publication of Thomson's "Winter" (1726). Thomson adopted blank verse for "The Seasons" and it is proper to enquire why. That his reason should have been that Pope had brought the couplet "to its utmost refinement and polish and that it was not capable of any further development"¹⁾ seems no very cogent reason, as it would equally apply to all later writers of couplets. That Thomson had a distinct preference for blank verse and was influenced by Philips is clear from "Autumn":

"Philips, Pomona's bard, the second thou
 Who nobly durst, in rhyme-unfettered verse,
 With British freedom sing the British song."

These lines show that Thomson set out to write blank verse in the manner of Milton. Now when we consider the very large Latin element of Thomson's poetry and

¹⁾ Phelps, "The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement," p. 38.

remember that as an undergraduate "his diction was so poetically splendid that Mr. Hamilton, the professor of Divinity, reproved him for speaking language unintelligible to a popular audience"¹⁾, it would seem that Thomson was attracted to Milton rather by his diction than by his metre. The floridity of Milton could not well be bound in the fetters of the couplet, and it was but natural that Thomson should be attracted to the metre of Milton and Philips, since he desired to employ their diction. Thomson never took a simple Germanic word when there was an available synonym of Latin origin, and the longer the Latin word, the better. The "words of learned length and thundering sound" were part and parcel of the man. He had trained himself to use them, perhaps hoping to amaze "the gazing (Scotchmen) ranged around", and this diction could not possibly be employed in the couplet, but fitted in remarkably well with Miltonic blank verse. Yet there is nothing of the rebel in Thomson and he certainly did not choose blank verse out of a mere desire to differ from Pope and his compeers. Pope accepted the "Seasons", enjoyed the poem, and probably even corrected it.

Thomson's blank verse is, of course, entirely different from Milton's. The eighteenth century poet lacks Milton's supreme art of verse-paragraphing; instead of Milton's "organ voice", there is a diffuseness, a lack of continuity in the broken lines, that go far to rank Thomson among the second class poets, however important his historical position may be. Still, his blank verse is real blank verse, not merely unrhymed couplets.

The influence of the poetic theories of the day is quite noticeable in Thomson's blank verse. Antithesis and balancing is fairly frequent, and inversions of accent

¹⁾ Samuel Johnson. *Life of Thomson*.

are eschewed. Occasionally a few lines occur which, if duly provided with rhymes, might do very well for heroic couplets.

Thomson's other blank verse poems, "Britannia" (1729), "Liberty" (1734—1736), "To Dr. Delacour in Ireland", "A Poem sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton", "A Poem to the Memory of the Right Hon. Lord Talbot", etc., were too little read even in Thomson's day to exert much influence.

Christopher Pitt's "Miscellaneous Poems", published in 1727, contain paraphrases of several psalms. With the exception of one they are all written in heroic couplets or in eights and sixes. Psalm CXXXIX, however, is "in Miltonic verse". Technically this verse is more like Milton's than any that had gone before. Nearly half the lines run on into the next, there is a great variety in the pauses and no attempt at balanced lines. The verse is even divided into paragraphs. The secret of organic variations of the regular foot Pitt had, of course, not discovered, so that his lines are harsh enough. Although the sense is drawn out in Milton's way, "true musical delight" is conspicuous by its absence. Still, Pitt must have studied Milton thoroughly.

Somerville's popular blank verse poem "The Chace" (1735) was modelled on Milton and Philips. That he loved Milton appears from a reference in his "Ode Inscribed to Stanhope".

What though majestic Milton stands alone,
Inimitably great!
Bow low, ye bards, at his exalted throne,
And lay your labours at his feet:
Capacious soul, whose boundless thoughts survey
Heaven, Hell, Earth, Sea;
Lo, where th'embattled gods appear,
The mountains from their seats they tear,
And shake th'empyrean heavens with impious war.

Somerville gives us the pedigree of his blank verse in the preface to his "Chace":

"The gentlemen, who are fond of a gingle at the close of every verse and think no poem truly musical, but what is in rhyme, will here find themselves disappointed. If they be pleased to read over the short preface before the *Paradise Lost*, Mr. Smith's poem in memory of his friend Mr. John Philips, and the Archbishop of Cambray's letter to Monsieur Fontenelle, they may probably be of another opinion. For my part, I shall not be ashamed to follow the example of Milton, Philips, Thomson, and all our best tragic writers."

The last few words might suggest that Somerville was influenced by Shakespearean blank verse, but of this no evidence appears.

Somerville's blank verse is, technically, intermediate between Milton's and Thomson's. It lacks the broken character and words of "learned length", so characteristic of Thomson's verse ¹⁾. It would seem, however, that John Philips was Somerville's real instructor in blank verse, as he refers to Philips again and again ²⁾. Thomson is mentioned twice in his works, viz., in the preface to "The Chace", and in the "Epistle to Mr. Thomson on The First Edition of His Seasons" ¹⁾. In the second instance, he praises Milton and Philips, but reproves Thomson. It is worth noticing that the frequent employment

¹⁾ See Somerville's Epistle to Mr. Thomson:

"Read Philips much, consider Milton more;
But from their dross extract the purer ore.
To coin new words, or to restore the old
In southern bards is dangerous and bold;
But rarely, very rarely, will succeed
When minted on the other side of Tweed."

²⁾ Preface to *Hobbinol*, a burlesque poem in blank verse; canto I of *Hobbinol*; Invocation addressed to Mr. John Philips, author of the *Cyder* poem and *The Splendid Shilling*; Preface to *the Chace*; Epistle to Mr. Thomson.

of a trochee in the first foot of a line which gives variety of movement to the verse of "The Seasons"¹⁾ is absent from "The Chace". The perusal of "The Seasons", however, probably caused Somerville to insert in "The Chace" (which he had started before 1726), patriotic and oriental digressions. He did not adopt Thomson's moralising habit.

After Somerville, the century produced before the advent of Cowper three more kinds of blank verse that can in any way be said to have special characteristics. These are Glover's, Young's, and Blair's.

Glover's "Leonidas" (1737) enjoyed a considerable vogue. Indeed, it is no little surprise to the patient reader to find that the fourth edition appeared in 1739. Glover pushes to its extreme point what Fenton had done before him, that is to say, the tendency to break the line, by having a stop in the middle — preferably after the fifth syllable — in several successive lines. Milton had done this with great effect, but with due variation. Glover drew a ruler through his blank verse after the second (or third) foot and placed a full stop, where the vertical line met the horizontal lines. Thomson, too, is not quite free from this fault, but Glover pursues it with inexorable tenacity.

Young's blank verse shows traces of the influence of the dramatic variety, for though the blank verse of the eighteenth century is or professes to be Miltonic, there are other kinds. There are the unrhymed heroic couplets, as used by Samuel Johnson in "Irene", and there is the dramatic verse, which aims at being Shakespearean, as in Nicholas Rowe. Young, who had been a tragic dramatist, employs the redundant syllable and trisyllabic feet in "The Complaint, or The Night Thoughts". At the same time, Young shows the influence of the heroic couplet

¹⁾ Cambridge History of English Literature Vol. X. p. 112.

perhaps more than any of his contemporaries. On an average, one line in four is a run-on line; there is plenty of balancing, epigram and aphorism. The abundance of quotations from Young which have passed into common use show how effectively he applied Pope's lessons:

"Procrastination is the thief of time."

"All men think all men mortal, but themselves."

"The Task" owes not a little to Young in this point.

Blair joins the characteristics of Glover to those of Young. He has Glover's full-stopt breaks and surpasses Young in the freedom with which he uses feminine endings.

In "The Task" and especially in "Yardley Oak", Milton's level has been so far approached that we may call these poems "Miltonic" in the sense that in their special type they are as good as Milton and that blank verse has not much more to learn. Still, Cowper's blank verse is entirely different from Milton's. Instead of Milton's loftiness and austerity, we have homely scenes and pleasant descriptions. It seems occasionally as if William Cowper is constituting himself our good friend to impart avuncular counsel. No wonder that Cowper entitled one of his poems "Table Talk". We admire his conversational powers through the medium of blank verse; we are not awed by any lofty Miltonic strain.

The prosodic practice of Miltonic blank verse in the century presents a series of fluctuations. The heights are reached by Thomson and Cowper. Of the two Thomson created a new variety and Cowper most delights our ears. Most of the other blank verse has little intrinsic merit. The poets did their best to apply Miltonic principles, but usually with scant success. What these principles were, they did not quite realise; the scientific analysis of modern poetry had not yet arisen. Probably they studied Milton more than the poets of our own day. That they did not

reach his sonorous music, his rhythm, his use of verse-paragraphing and distribution of pauses, is evident; but who, lacking genius, shall succeed in this, the easiest of all metres to write, but the most difficult to write well?

It is worth observing that Miltonic blank verse was but little influenced by the neo-classic theories of the couplet. Probably the only two English poets who exceeded "Paradise Lost" in having more run-on lines and fewer end-stopt lines were two Augustans, viz. John Philips and Thomas Newcomb ("The Last Judgement of Men and Angels, A Poem in 12 books, after the manner of Milton", 1723)¹). Even Shelley and Swinburne have fewer run-on lines and more end-stopt lines than "Paradise Lost"¹). In Milton's verse there is a steady fall in the proportion of run-on lines. Thus the percentage of run-on lines in "Paradise Lost" is fifty-eight, in the subsequent "Paradise Regained" it is only forty-five. Shenstone, Watts, Cowper, Somerville, Akenside, Newcomb and Philips have more run-on lines than "Paradise Regained". Glover, Mallet, Thomson, Blair and Young have fewer. The lowest point is touched by Thomas Young, whose percentage of run-on lines is only twenty-five. Here the influence of the heroic couplet is unmistakable; indeed Young used more end-stopt lines in his blank verse than Pope did in his couplets.

It is not necessary to enlarge here upon the prosodic theory of blank verse. There is ample enough illustration of prosodic practice. But since it is so often stated that at first blank verse was despised as much as was the couplet later on, it may be well to refer once more to the first of the Miltonians, John Philips, and to quote a passage from "The Life and Character of Mr. John Philips", by Mr. Sewell. (London, 1714).

¹) See "The Technique of English Non-Dramatic Blank Verse", by E. P. Morton. Chicago. 1910.

"There it was (viz. at Oxford) that, following the natural Bent of his Genius, beside other valuable Authors, he became acquainted with Mr. Milton, whom he studied with application, and traced him in all his successful Translations from the Ancients. There was not an Allusion in his *Paradise Lost*, drawn from the Thoughts, or Expressions of Homer, or Virgil, which he could not immediately refer to, and by that, he perceived what a peculiar Life and Grace their sentiments added to English Poetry, how much their images raised its spirit, and what Weight and Beauty their words, when translated, gave to its language. Nor was he less curious in observing the Force and Elegancy of his Mother tongue, but, by the example of his darling Milton searched backwards into the works of our Old English Poets to furnish himself with proper, sounding, and significant expressions, and prove the due extent and compass of the Language. For this purpose he carefully read over Chaucer and Spenser."

The history of blank verse in the eighteenth century, when contrasted with the history of the heroic couplet, shows that, throughout the century, there ran two parallel streams, the one swelling as the other dwindled. Robert Lloyd (1733—1764), whom Cowper in an "Epistle" addressed to him, called:

"Sole heir, and single,
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle,"

sums up as follows the dual nature of eighteenth century poetry in his poem: "On Rhyme":

Some, Milton-mad, (an affectation
Glean'd up from college education)
Approve no verse, but that which flows
In epithetic measur'd prose,
With trim expressions daily drest

Stol'n, misapply'd, and not confest,
And call it writing in the style
Of that great Homer of our isle.
Whilom, what time, eftsoons and erst,
(So Prose is oftentimes beverst)
Sprinkled with quaint fantastic phrase,
Uncouth to ears of modern days,
Make up the metre, which they call
Blank, classic blank, their all in all.
Can only blank admit sublime?
Go read and measure Dryden's rhyme.
Admire the magic of his song,
See how his numbers roll along,
With ease and strength and varied pause,
Not cramp'd by sound, nor metre's laws.
Is harmony the gift of rhyme?
Read, if you can, your Milton's chime;
Where, taste, not wantonly severe,
May find the measure, not the ear.
As rhyme, rich rhyme, was Dryden's choice,
And blank has Milton's nobler voice,
I deem it as the subjects lead,
That either measure will succeed.
That rhyme will readily admit
Of fancy, numbers, force and wit;
But though each couplet has its strength
It palls in works of epic length.

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CHAPTER IX

MILTONIC DICTION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free.

William WORDSWORTH

Milton's vocabulary was not extensive. In his verse it embraces only about eight thousand words, that is, about half the number used by Shakespeare. And yet it is by this very austerity and parsimony that Milton wins his most signal triumphs of sheer verbal power. By applying the "grand style" to a great theme, he provided a lasting vindication of the powers of the English language.

To attempt, within our present limits, an analysis of Milton's diction would be impossible. Its pregnant force, its virile economy, its severe splendour, exemplify as brilliantly as anything else in English literature that mastery of mere language which distinguishes the highest poetry, — a quality so ably defined by Myers in his "Essays Classic and Modern": —

"And, indeed, in poetry of the first order, almost every word (to use a mathematical metaphor) is raised to a higher power. It continues to be an articulate sound and a logical step in the argument; but it becomes also a musical sound and a centre of emotional force. It becomes a musical sound; — that is to say, its consonants and vowels are arranged to bear a relation to the consonants and vowels near it, — a relation of which accent, quantity, rhyme, assonance,

and alliteration are specialized forms, but which may be of a character more subtle than any of these. And it becomes a centre of emotional force; that is to say, the complex associations which it evokes modify the associations evoked by other words in the same passage in a way quite distinct from grammatical or logical connection."

Milton's poetic diction reflects his education. In the first place it is permeated with the vocabulary of the English Bible.

"And God Said, 'Let the waters generate
Reptile with spawn abundant, living soul;
And let Fowl fly above the Earth, with wings
Displayed on the open firmament of heaven!'
And God created the great whales, and each
Soul living, each that crept, which plenteously
The waters generated by their kinds,
And every bird of wing after his kind,
And saw that it was good, and blessed them, saying,
'Be fruitful, multiply, and, in the seas,
And lakes, and running streams, the waters fill;
And let the fowl be multiplied on the earth!'"

The style of the Authorised Version was already slightly archaic in 1611 and to the joint influence of the Bible and Spenser must be ascribed Milton's love of English archaisms.

The second source of Milton's diction was the language and literature of Rome and Greece, for in Milton the Renaissance and the Reformation join hands.

"Forthwith from council to the work they flew;
None arguing stood; innumerable hands
Were ready; in a moment up they turned
Wide the celestial soil, and saw beneath
The originals of Nature in their crude
Conception; sulphurous and nitrous foam
They found, they mingled, and, with subtle art
Concocted and adusted, they reduced

To blackest grain, and into store conveyed.
 Part hidden veins digged up (nor hath this Earth
 Entrails unlike) of mineral and stone,
 Whereof to found their engines and their balls
 Of missive ruin; part incentive reed
 Provide, pernicious with one touch to fire.
 So all ere day-spring, under conscious Might,
 Secret they finished, and in order set,
 With silent circumspection, unespied."

The Italian writers, whom Milton knew so well, exercised a considerable influence on his diction ¹⁾. In his descriptions of morning and evening scenes the influence of Tasso's style is distinctly felt:

"Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
 Had in her sober livery all things clad;
 Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
 They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
 Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.
 She all night long her amorous descant sung:
 Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
 With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
 The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,
 Rising in clouded majesty, at length
 Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
 And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw;"

Elizabethan Romance was an important tributary to Miltonic diction. When Milton was born in 1608, Spenser had been dead nine years, Shakespeare had still eight years more to live. There are in Milton reminiscences of Spenser, Greene, Lodge, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Drayton, Hall, Donne, Phineas Fletcher, Drummond and Herrick ²⁾. Here are some echoes of old romance:

"and what resounds,
 In fable or romance of Uther's son,

¹⁾ See E. Pommrich: *Miltons Verhältnis zu Torquato Tasso*. Diss: Leipzig, 1902.

²⁾ See K. Assmann. *Miltons epische Technik nach Paradise Lost*, Diss. Berlin, 1913. p. 14.

Begirt with British and Armoric knights;
And all who since, baptized or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisonde,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell
By Fontarabbia".

Besides a number of archaisms, mostly from Spenser, there are many neologisms in Milton's works and the greater number of these appear in *Paradise Lost*: Infinitude, emblazonry, liturgical, ensanguined, anarchy, gloom, irradiance, bannered, echoing, rumoured, impassive, moonstruck, Satanic and others occur for the first time in Milton ¹⁾.

It is the suggestive, imaginative composition and combination of the various elements of metre and diction enumerated in this and the preceding chapter that go to make Milton's verse wonderful in its sonorous harmony. It was the weakness of the early Miltonians that they merely turned these poetic gestures into mannerisms. Inverted word-order, conversion of adjectives into adverbs or substantives, unusual compounds, appositions, parentheses, elision of words, Latinity, adjectives ending in "ean" or "ian", enumeration of proper names, — the artful accumulation of all these devices into a single poem suffices to prove Milton's influence clearly enough. But though the early Miltonians borrowed stones from the Miltonic edifice, very few of them could add his architectural genius. Yet there can be no doubt that they recognised its greatness. For most of them Miltonic diction (as distinct from metre, rhythm, theme and so forth) was from the beginning a necessary element in Miltonic imitation.

The critical attitude of the century towards Miltonic diction is worth noticing. The eighteenth century poets had two inexhaustible quarries of poetic diction, — Pope's

¹⁾ "The English Language", by L. P. Smith, p. 114.

“Homer” and Milton’s “Paradise Lost”. The diction of Pope’s Homer was itself influenced by Milton; in the preface to the “Iliad” Pope wrote:

“Perhaps the mixture of some Graecisms and old words after the manner of Milton, if done without too much affectation, might not have an ill effect in a version of this particular work, which most of any other seems to require a venerable antique cast.”

An investigation of the relative importance of these two poetic models would probably show that Milton’s diction was the more important in the eighteenth century. It certainly had more lasting results. The two schools fought a long and hard struggle; praise and abuse abounded. As early as 1712 Addison wrote in “The Spectator” (Jan. 26th, 1712):

“We are in the last Place to consider the *Language*; and as the learned world is very much divided upon Milton, as to this Point, I hope they will excuse me if I appear particular in any of my Opinions, and encline to those who judge the most advantageously of the Author”.

Of the numerous critical comments we shall select one of either party. Addison defended Milton’s diction in his “Paradise Lost” papers as follows:

“It is not therefore sufficient, that the Language of an Epic Poem be Perspicuous, unless it be also Sublime. To this end it ought to deviate from the common Forms and ordinary Phrases of Speech. The Judgement of a Poet very much discovers it self in shunning the common Roads of Expression, without falling into such ways of Speech as may seem stiff and unnatural; he must not swell into a false Sublime, by endeavouring to avoid the other Extream.

.

“Under this head may be reckon’d the placing the

Adjective after the Substantive, the Transposition of Words, the turning the Adjective into a Substantive, with several other Foreign Modes of Speech which this Poet has naturalized to give his Verse the greater Sound and throw it out of Prose.

.
 “*Milton*, by the above-mentioned Helps, and by the Choice of the noblest Words and Phrases which our Tongue would afford him, has carried our Language to a greater Height than any of the *English* Poets have ever done before or after him, and made the Sublimity of his Stile equal to that of his Sentiments.”

This is a defence of Miltonic diction by a true son of the neo-classic school. Leonard Welsted, the panegyrist of John Philips, published a collection of “Epistles, Odes etc. Written on Several Subjects” in 1724. In the introductory address to the Duke of Newcastle he makes a spirited attack upon the “rules”:

“What I contend against is the common traditionary Rules, such as for Example; Poetry is an Imitation; It has Nature for its Object; As an Art, it has some End and consequently Means or Rules to attain that End; An English verse contains five feet.”

Yet this early revolutionary could not endure Milton’s diction:

“The Attempt will end in nothing but an uncouth unnatural Jargon, like the Phrase and Stile of *Milton* which is a second *Babel*, or Confusion of all Languages, a Fault that can never be enough regretted in that immortal Poet.”

John Philips started the imitation of Milton’s poetic diction in 1701 with “The Splendid Shilling”. The few lines in imitation of Milton which Roscommon added to the second edition of his “Essay on Translated Verse” (1685) show a slight imitation of the diction of “Paradise Lost”. Somewhat more markedly Miltonic is the vocabulary of Sir

Richard Blackmore's couplet poems: "Prince Arthur" (1695), "King Arthur" (1697) and "Eliza" (1705). In these, however, as well as in Addison's "Milton's Stile imitated in a Translation of a Part of the third Aeneid", Miltonic diction is mainly restricted to some words or phrases, either borrowed or imitated. But in "The Splendid Shilling" the diction was as thoroughly Miltonic as in any later Miltonic imitation. Inverted word-order, conversion of one part of speech into another, omission of articles and possessive pronouns, archaisms, accumulation of proper names, Latinisms, — Philips swallows Milton's diction whole with inimitable effect:

"My *Galligaskins* that have long withstood
The Winter's Fury, and encroaching Frosts,
By time subdu'd, (what will not time subdue!)
A horrid Chasm disclose, with Orifice
Wide, Discontinuous, at which the Winds
Eurus and *Auster*, and the dreadful force
Of *Boreas*, that congeals the *Cronian* Waves,
Tumultuous enter with dire chilling Blasts,
Portending Agues."

In "Bleinheim" (1705) Philips tried to bring his Miltonic diction on to a higher level. The subject demanded lofty treatment; so the diction was inflated to a tumescence of Latinity beside which Milton's appears thin and meagre:

"Now from each
The brazen instruments of Death discharge
Horrific flames, and turbid streaming clouds
Of smoke sulphureous; intermixt with these
Large globous irons fly, of dreadful hiss,
Singeing the air.
.....
 fragments of steel,
And stones and glass, and nitrous grains adust;
A thousand ways at once the shiver'd orbs
Fly diverse, working torment, and foul rout."

This is Philips' way of describing a volley. In fact, in "Bleinheim" we find for the first time that most distressing would-be Miltonic mannerism, which became a nuisance in Philips' "Cyder" (1708) as well as in Thomson, Young and many others, that is, the habit of using a dozen words — preferably of Latin origin — where one will do. Thomson's description of a drought and earthquake is famous:

"Much yet remains unsung: the rage intense
Of brazen-vaulted skies, of iron fields,
Where drought and famine starve the blasted year;
Fired by the torch of noon to tenfold rage,
The infuriated hill that shoots the pillar'd flame;
And, roused within the subterranean world,
The expanding earthquake, that resistless shakes
Aspiring cities from their solid base,
And buries mountains of the flaming gulph.

.
Behold, slow-settling o'er the lurid grove,
Unusual darkness broods; and growing gains,
The full possession of the sky, surcharged
With wrathful vapour, from the secret beds,
Where sleep the mineral generations, drawn.
Thence nitre, sulphur, and the fiery spume
Of fat bitumen, steaming on the day."

A careful comparison of the later versions and books of "The Seasons" and "Cyder" can leave no doubt that Thomson derived the habit from Philips rather than from Milton direct. For example, with the above quotation from "Summer" let us compare the following passage from "Cyder":

"for now the fields
Labour'd with thirst; Aquarius had not shed
His wonted show'rs: and Sirius parch'd, with heat
Solstitial, the green herb; hence 'gan relax
The ground's contexture; hence Tartarian dregs,
Sulphur and nitrous spume, enkindling fierce,
Bellow'd within their darksome caves."

.

"Meanwhile, the loosen'd winds,
 Infuriate, molten rocks and flaming globes
 Hurl'd high above the clouds; till, all their force
 Consum'd, her rav'nous jaws th'earth, satiate, clos'd."

It is customary to attribute Thomson's poetic diction to the influence of Milton ¹⁾. A comparison of only a few pages of the two poets already brings out the fact that Thomson is much more fond of gorgeous diction than Milton. Thomson *will* every now and then mount on stilts, he will be to "turgid 'word' and tumid 'diction' dear". His fault is not that he fails to reach Milton's loftiness, but that he loves the big word for the big word's sake. Thus in the first hundred lines of Book XII of "Paradise Lost" one finds: plenteous, arrogate, tyrannous, sovranty, tyrannise, bituminous, habitation, execrable, donation, encroachment, dividual, inordinate, and servitude; and in the first hundred lines of "Autumn" Thomson uses: nitrous, concocted, distend, devolving, beauteous, cope, effulgence, invests, attemper'd, lucid, poise, effulgent, illumined, inclement, infinite, lethargic, voracious, lavish, mechanic, fabric, polluted, and viands. The number of participial constructions is far greater in Thomson than in Milton, and we may justly conclude that in the matter of diction Thomson goes further (and fares worse) than Milton.

An important consideration on the question of Thomson's style consists in his education and this has perhaps been neglected too much. Until his twenty-fifth year, Thomson spoke the Scottish dialect though he read and wrote English. The best treatises on English Rhetoric were written by two eighteenth century Scottish rhetoricians, Hugh Blair ²⁾ and George Campbell ³⁾. Their works are

¹⁾ e. g. "In the constant Latinism of his diction Milton's example is ever before the eyes of the eighteenth century poet". E. G. Courthope, *A History of English Poetry*, V, p. 313.

²⁾ Hugh Blair, "Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres".

³⁾ George Campbell, "Philosophy of Rhetoric."

written in what Saintsbury calls a "full dress plain style" ¹⁾ and Latinisms abound. Nor is this to be wondered at. Latin was the language by which educated Scotchmen often made themselves understood on the continent. Scotch law is and was much more Latin than English law ²⁾. Latin held a very large place in vernacular Scotch and the result must have been that in Edinburgh University circles Latin words came to be used familiarly. Any doubt on this subject is dispelled by a comparison between Fielding's and Smollett's style. We know from Johnson that Thomson overdid his rhetoric at the University, and if the latter's Scotch professor of divinity deemed it necessary to reprove him for using language "unintelligible to a popular audience", we can readily imagine how Latinised Thomson's style of speech must have been. The very large Latin element in Thomson's poetry must be attributed partly to Thomson's Scotch origin and education, partly to his admiration for Milton and Philips. Of these reasons the first would seem to be the cause of the second.

What was a powerful vehicle for Milton's pregnancy of thought, was not always a fit medium for Thomson's imagination, which often could not soar with the language. What had been genius in Milton, tended to become bombast in Thomson and certainly did become so in his successors. How far the Miltonians dared to go is well proved by an interesting poem, entitled: "This so much talked of and expected Old Woman's Dunciad or, Midwife's Master-Piece by Margelina Scribelinda Macularia". It was published in London in 1751. The diction of this perfectly serious Miltonic blank verse poem is so swollen that the author added what he styles an "interpretation" or paraphrase of every line at the bottom of the pages. This paraphrase is in plain

¹⁾ G. Saintsbury. "A History of English Criticism." London 1911, p. 195.

²⁾ See W. Bell, "Dictionary and Digest of the Law of Scotland," 1890, and W. Green, "Encyclopaedia of the Law of Scotland", 1896—1904.

language "for the sake of those Herd of Readers who are void of a taste for the sublime."

The diction of verse-writers between Thomson and Cowper often deserves Johnson's observation that if blank verse is not tumid and gorgeous, it is mere prose. The flood of Miltonic diction continued unbroken. It served as a relief for those to whom literature did not mean the undistinguished analysis of what could be said within the narrow compass of the couplet. For many there was mystery and distance in Miltonic diction. Romance is mystery and distance and in the couplet was poetic myopia. What wonder that from such a vehicle many "dapper and undistinguished" men broke out as from a prison.

There have been few people who knew their Milton better than William Cowper. Yet the influence of Milton's diction is not by far so marked in him as for instance in Philips or Thomson. Cowper's character was all against the grand style; domesticity was dearer to him than sublimity. He was too great a poet to force his talents as his fellow-Miltonians had so often done. Of the various features of Miltonic diction, inversion and conversion are most common; his Latinity is comparatively slight. Yet even Cowper is not entirely free from the tumid habit. It is scattered throughout "The Task" and the best Miltonic poem of the century "Yardley Oak" is not free from it:

Survivor sole, and hardly such, of all
That once lived here, thy brethren; at my birth
(Since which I number threescore winters past),
A shatter'd veteran, hollow-trunk'd perhaps,
As now, and with excoriate forks deform;
Relics of ages! could a mind, imbued
With truth from Heaven, created things adore,
I might with reverence kneel, and worship thee.
It seems idolatry with some excuse,
When our forefather Druids in their oaks
Imagined sanctity. The conscience, yet

Unpurified by an authentic act
Of amnesty, the meed of blood divine,
Loved not the light, but, gloomy, into gloom
Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste
Of fruit proscribed, as to a refuge, fled.
Thou wast a bauble once, a cup and ball
Which babes might play with; and the thievish jay,
Seeking her food, with ease might have purloin'd
The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
Thy yet close folded latitude of boughs,
And all thine embryo vastness, at a gulp.

Cowper created a new kind of blank verse in so far as he adapted Miltonic verse to the needs of lesser men and homelier topics. And he rendered an immense service to English literature in sowing the seeds of nineteenth century blank verse.

Throughout the century we find Miltonic echoes in every kind of poetry and practically no poet is wholly without. The usual source is "Paradise Lost", but it is by no means the only source. From the beginning the minor poems exerted considerable influence. A volume might easily be filled with parallel passages, though it might be difficult — as in the case of Thomson — to prove whether the diction is borrowed from the poetry of Milton or from that of his imitators.

The history of Miltonic diction in the eighteenth century illustrates the danger of labelling everything in the realm of eighteenth century poetry as either classical or romantic. That diction is both classical and romantic, or rather it is neither, it is simply Miltonic. In Milton, as in his diction, the two qualities were forged into an inseparable unity. The diction of the early Miltonians was romantic in its reactionary tendencies. To the coupleteers metre and diction were equally a b c; to the Miltonians their beloved master's style was the unknown quantity X. One fact stands out above all the rest, namely that Pope did not dominate

the poetic diction of the eighteenth century; the field was fairly evenly divided between him and Milton.

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CHAPTER X

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN PHILIPS

"*Philips*, facetious bard, the second thou
Who nobly durst, in rhyme-unfetter'd verse,
With *British* freedom sing the *British* song;"

JAMES THOMSON: AUTUMN

"There is but one metre, and Pope is its prophet, was the doctrine of the greater part of the eighteenth century".¹⁾ This is the burden of eighteenth century literary criticism. But is it true? From the first decade down to the last of that much abused century there was a strong cult of non-dramatic blank verse. Of this Milton was the prophet. Let us from the host of admiring references to blank verse poems select one which was published when the century was but nine years old. It was uttered by an anonymous lover of Milton. He was no friend of John Philips, the first Miltonian, and was not likely to exaggerate the latter's popularity. Yet he grudgingly admits the immense vogue of the work of a man who wrote practically nothing but blank verse.

In 1709 there came out: "Milton's Sublimity Asserted: in A Poem Occasion'd by a late Celebrated Piece, entitled, *Cyder, a Poem; In Blank Verse, By Philo-Milton.*" In the Preface the author discusses the popularity of the man he is going to attack:

"I do not think there is any Work extant, that hath alarm'd the World more than his; and bin, I

¹⁾ Professor G. Saintsbury. "A History of English Prosody." Vol. II. p. 447.



Mr John Philips
M. L. Trickett Scul

From "The Life and Character of Mr. John Philips.
By Mr. Sewell. The Third Edition. London. MDCCXX.

may say, some years so much the talk and hopes of the Publick, especially those under his own *Meridian*. Nor indeed has it fail'd in giving great satisfaction, being generally caressed with that fondness, which almost deserves the name of *Dotage*; Though the success is not so wonderful, if we believe the Poet that

Expectation makes the Blessing dear

And if we observe, It had not only the advantage of being introduc'd under the Umbrage of *Milton*, but came also flying upon the Wings of Fame; not to mention the many Heroes who were summoned to defend it.

"Wherein all its Beauties consist is not obvious, I dare presume, to every Reader; It being in many places made Artificially dark, to prevent every common Understanding from peeping into the Bottom of it; but such is the Genius of this Age, to admire *Name* and *Novelty*, That they have now raised the Author to the highest Class in the *Muses* School; Nor will he need any future *Apotheosis*, to immortalize his Name, as long as Cyder, A Poem, lies securely bound in sheeps-skin; For we may take notice, That notwithstanding he falls so far short, both of the *Diction*, and *Harmony* of *Milton*; Yet he is addressed with the title of being his *Poetical* Son, as *Milton* was of *Spenser*, tho' there indeed the Son exceeded the Father, and the Copy outshone the Original."

In the poem, which is in blank verse too, Philips' work is attacked as follows:

"Though *Ariconian Knights*, and *Fairest Dames*,
Rich Costard-Mongers and their Wives I trow
 Snatch with Rapacious Hands, the Immortal Bays,
 From *Milton's* Garland to adorn thy Brow,

Soon shall it wither like a Sick'ning Flower;
Though round me *Envy* growls, and *Criticks* stand
Like Hissing *Vipers* threatening with their Stings;
To *Milton's* Memory I'll raise my Voice."

The eighteenth century was strongly under the spell of Milton. Editions of his works abounded. He was universally read and admired. There are perpetual allusions to him by eighteenth century correspondents, *inter alia*, by Alexander Pope. Periodical literature is crowded with essays about Milton. Nearly all poets borrowed phrases from him. Hundreds of bards tried to copy his style¹). And the first of thorough-going Miltonians was John Philips, who founded a blank verse school which was highly popular till the very end of the century. No small part of the historic significance which has been laid upon the shoulders of James Thomson, is due to John Philips.

John Philips was born at his father's house at Bampton in Oxfordshire on the thirtieth of December, 1676. "Paradise Lost", the work that was to shape the course of Philips' poetry, had been published nine years before and John Milton had been in his grave for two years, when the "second Milton" was born.

Of Philips' ancestry little is known. His grandfather, Stephen Philips, was canon-residentary of Hereford Cathedral and vicar of Longwardine, near that city. Stephen Philips, father of the poet, was born in 1638. He was educated at Oxford and, having taken orders, married Mary Cooke, only daughter of Thomas Cooke, B. D., vicar of Bampton. In 1669 Stephen Philips, D. D. succeeded his father-in-law as vicar of Bampton. There is no evidence that the family was related to Edward and John Phillips, Milton's nephews, or to Ambrose Philips, Addison's friend.

¹) See J. W. Good. "Studies in the Milton Tradition" (Univ. of Illinois Studies in Eng. Lang. & Lit. 1915). R. D. Havens: "The Influence of Milton on English Poetry." Harvard University Press. 1922.

Stephen Philips, the poet's father, died in 1684 and was buried in his church. A stone and a fine monument were erected to his memory by his widow. The stone bears the inscription: "Hic jacet Stephen Philips S. T. P. Obiit 1684" and the monument: "Rev. Stephen Philips D. D. died Oct. 20. 1684 aged 46. Monument erected by his widow who was Mary dau. of Thomas Cooke." This is followed by a long Latin Epitaph by Dr. Ailworth ¹⁾.

In the Tanner M. S. 290 in the Bodleian, there are three letters of Stephen Philips to Sancroft about scruples of conscience on having paid some money as expenses for appointment to a prebend at Hereford and in being troubled with doubts about Christianity. The poet's father therefore maintained the family relation with Hereford, the county which inspired so much of Philips's poetry.

The family at the Bampton vicarage must have been a numerous and a distinguished one. Edmund Smith, Philips' bosom-friend, informs us that "there were scarce so many extraordinary men in any one". In the "Prefatory Discourse to the Poem on Mr. Philips", which Samuel Johnson copied in the Bodleian, he goes on to say:

"I have been acquainted with five of his brothers (of which three are still living), all men of fine parts, yet all of a very unlike temper and genius.... One of them had made the greatest progress in the study of the law of nature and nations of any one I know."

Of a second brother, who died at an early age, Smith says:

"He had genius either for poetry or oratory and though very young, composed several very agreeable pieces.... He might have been the Waller, as the other was the Milton of his time."

John was instructed at home in the first rudiments of

¹⁾ I owe these particulars to the kindness of Rev. George C. C. Rodwell, Vicar of Bampton.

grammar. When he was eight, his father died, and his mother must soon after have removed to Hereford. At the age of fifteen John was elected a scholar at Winchester, where he mastered Latin and Greek. Edmund Smith informs us that he did not know French, so that the author of "The Splendid Shilling" cannot have known Boileau's "Lutrin", which was translated into English by Rowe in 1708.

We have it on the authority of Samuel Johnson that Philips enjoyed two great luxuries at school — the reading of Milton and having his hair combed while he sat still and in raptures for hours together. It seems that the lung troubles, from which he suffered so long and which finally caused his death at the early age of 32, had already begun at this time, for it is stated that his health was delicate on account of which he was treated with special indulgence. He won a certain renown by his Latin poems and was generally popular.

Philips matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, on August 16th 1697. He was then 21 years of age. He intended to study medicine and "he was very well versed in the whole Compass of Natural Philosophy", says Dr. Sewell, his first biographer. Of this there is not much evidence in his works outside the domain of botany, in which he must have been really proficient. We may assume that young Philips felt rather more attracted towards the realm of letters, for he must have carefully read the works of Chaucer, Spenser and Milton and have taken a deep interest in English antiquities, especially those of his own county of Herefordshire. His works show such a profound knowledge of "Paradise Lost", Camden's "Britannia" and Drayton's "Polyolbion" that he must have had little time left for other studies.

Of his Oxford friends, Edmund Smith and William Browne deserve mention. The former celebrated their

friendship after Philips' death in "A Poem to the Memory of Mr. John Philips"; the latter's family had intermarried with that of Philips. Smith's behaviour at the University was so riotous that he was finally expelled in 1705. He had taken his M. A. degree in 1691 and was therefore several years in advance of John Philips, who only came up in 1697. We may presume that the influence of "Captain Rag" on our poet was not wholly beneficial. It may partly account for Philips' frequent references to ale and tobacco. At Christ Church Philips was under Dean Aldrich. This gentleman was a great lover of the weed and the custom of smoking tobacco was highly in vogue at Christ Church in Philips' time. No wonder that Philips celebrated tobacco in all his acknowledged poems, except in "Bleinheim".

Philips seems to have been deeply in love at the University. The lady was Mary Meers, daughter of the principal of Brasenose. Meers was a Herefordshire man, and had made Philips welcome at his house. The evidence for this love-affair is derived only from various poems, namely, Philips' "Ode to a Lady with Milton's Paradise Lost", his "Ode ad Henricum St. John, Armig. 1706" and Leonard Welsted's "Poem to the Memory of the Incomparable Mr. Philips" (1710). Poetical effusions on love should be taken *cum grano salis* in the search after biographical data. That Philips should have died for love of her, as Welsted says, is somewhat improbable in the man who very probably wrote "The Fall of Chloe's Jordan". It is likely that Philips loved the lady, but that, considering his prospects and her position in society, he could not muster enough courage to declare his love.

At college his pen was busy. Smith tells us that Philips wrote "The Splendid Shilling" before he was twenty which would mean that he composed it while still at Winchester. This is impossible since it is an Oxford poem which must have been written by an impecunious Oxford

man. In the "Designed Dedication to William Browne, Esq. of Ewithington in the County of Hereford", which Philips intended to be prefixed to "The Splendid Shilling", he informs us that "you will find a vast difference between some parts and others, which proceeds not from your humble servant's negligence, but diet". "This poem", Philips continues, "was begun when he had little victuals and no money; and was finished when he had the misfortune, at a virtuous lady's house, to meet with both." The poem was perhaps started at college and finished at home during the long vacation.

"The Splendid Shilling" was first published in 1701 in "A Collection of Poems" published by D. Browne and Benj. Tooke. It was printed without Philips' consent. As the poem had been circulating among his friends, it was an easy prey. Another false copy was inserted in "A New Miscellany of original poems on several subjects", printed in the same year by Peter Buck and G. Straban, whilst the second edition of Browne and Tooke's "Collection" was published in 1702 by R. Smith. It was only in 1705, when another false copy had been published by B. Bragge that "A true copy" was printed. Hitherto it had only been called "An Imitation of Milton", now the full title was: "The Splendid Shilling, An Imitation of Milton". The name of the author was not mentioned ¹⁾.

"The Splendid Shilling" enjoyed an immense vogue for over a century. Addison in "The Tatler" (No. 249) made a shilling "in a soft voice give an account of his life and adventures.... The first adventure was my being in a poet's pocket, who was so taken with the brightness and novelty of my appearance that it gave occasion to the finest burlesque poem in the British language, entitled

¹⁾ R. D. Havens in "The Influence of Milton on English Poetry" (p. 96) states that "it appeared over the author's name". This is not the case in my copy of this edition.

from me *The Splendid Shilling*". And Goldsmith declared in 1767 that:

"The Splendid Shilling has been an hundred times imitated without success. The truth is the first thing in this way must preclude all future attempts, for nothing is so easy to burlesque any man's manner when we are once showed the way" ¹⁾.

"The Splendid Shilling" was twice translated into Latin ²⁾, two Italian editions were published ³⁾, and it was even turned into rhyme ⁴⁾. The number of direct imitations is surprisingly great. "The Crooked Sixpence", "The Last Guinea", "The Copper Farthing", "The Birmingham Halfpenny" and dozens of others continued to appear till the end of the century. Thomson was inspired by the poem in his ludicrous account of fox-hunting in "Autumn". Philips was Somerville's favourite author; his "Hobbinol", dedicated to Hogarth, owes everything to "The Splendid Shilling". Cowper joined the imitators in his youth when he wrote "Verses written on finding the Heel of a Shoe" (1748) and even "The Task" was started as a burlesque of Milton's epic. The following passage from Book I is frankly burlesque:

The nurse sleeps sweetly, hired to watch the sick,
Whom snoring she disturbs. As sweetly he
Who quits the coach-box at the midnight hour
To sleep within the carriage more secure,
His legs depending at the open door.
Sweet sleep enjoys the curate in his desk,
The tedious rector drawling o'er his head,
And sweet the clerk below; but neither sleep
Of lazy nurse, who snores the sick man dead,
Nor his who quits the box at midnight hour

¹⁾ Goldsmith, "Beauties of English Poetry." i, p. 225.

²⁾ See R. D. Havens. "The Influence of Milton on English Poetry." p. 96, 97.

³⁾ *Il Cidro*, Firenze 1749, 1752.

⁴⁾ "The Lover's Miscellany." J. Roberts, 1719.

To slumber in the carriage more secure,
Nor sleep enjoyed by curate in his desk,
Nor yet the dozings of the clerk are sweet,
Compared with the repose the Sofa yields.

The eighteenth century thoroughly agreed with Cowper, when he wrote:

"And in thy numbers, Philips, shines for aye
The solitary shilling." ¹⁾

Philips' first biographer, Dr. Sewell, informs us that Philips came to town "at the request of some great persons", namely, Harley and St. John, who engaged him to write upon the battle of Blenheim. "Bleinheim" came out accordingly on January 2nd, 1705 ²⁾. The poem was exceedingly popular; there were four editions in the year of publication. Bennett, the publisher, may then have persuaded Philips, who was often loth to print his work, to publish a genuine copy of "The Splendid Shilling". According to a notice in "The Daily Courant" it was published in February 8th, 1705.

The next two years of Philips' life were spent in London. His complaint was getting worse, as he informs us in the "Ode ad Henricum St. John", written in acknowledgment of a present of wine and tobacco. Probably he was suffering from consumption. Yet he was busy all the time.

On Feb. 21st Thomas Bennet, his publisher, issued "Cerealia, an Imitation of Milton". As in the case of the authorised edition of "The Splendid Shilling" and "Bleinheim", the author is not mentioned on the titlepage. It was not included in the early collected editions of Philips and not printed as Philips' till 1780, when John Nicholls

¹⁾ The Task, iii, 455, 6. The passage from which these lines are taken is burlesque as well. The description of a dunghill, which follows, shows the influence of the diction and subject-matter of "Cyder".

²⁾ The Daily Courant, Jan. 2nd, 1705, "This day is published 'Blenheim', a poem inscribed to the R. H. Robert Harley, Esq. London. Th. Bennett, 1705."

included it in his "Select Collection of Poems". The latter adds the following note:

"This poem is taken from a folio copy, 1706, communicated from the Lambeth Library by Dr. Ducarel, in which the name of Philips was inserted in the handwriting of Abp. Tenison. It was published by T. Bennet, the bookseller for whom "Blenheim" was printed; another strong presumptive proof of its being by the same author."

Since 1780 it was several times reprinted with Philips' other works. The opening lines are characteristic; they show at once the author's great debt to "Paradise Lost" and to Camden and Drayton:

Of English tippie and the potent grain
Which in the conclave of Celestial Bow'rs
Bred fell debate, sing, Nymph of heav'nly stem!
Who, on the hoary top of Penmanmaur
Merlin the seer didst visit, whilst he sat
With astrolabe prophetic, to foresee
Young actions issuing from the Fates' Divan,
Full of thy pow'r, infus'd by nappy Ale.

"Cerealia" reminds us strongly of "Cyder". It sings in a mock heroic strain the praises of corn and ale in "Miltonic verse" and forms a link between "The Splendid Shilling" and "Cyder". With the former it has in common the love of "tippling ale" as well as a number of proper nouns from Camden's *Britannia*, such as Ariconium, and Cestrian; it shares with the latter the frequent use of "Ariconium" and, last but not least, the general mock heroic style and diction as well as an abundance of proper nouns greatly surpassing that of Virgil's *Georgics*, the first of which was the model of the poet of "Cerealia", as the second was the model of "Cyder". The battle of Blenheim is several times mentioned and Churchill is frequently praised in "Cerealia", which is almost a matter of course

in a man who, the year before, had written "Bleinheim". It seems next to impossible that an unknown imitator of Philips should have written such blank verse; it is technically quite as good as either "The Splendid Shilling" or "Cyder" and we may safely assume that "Cerealia" was written by John Philips.

Philips' fame had now become so great that he was deemed worthy of a poetical offensive. Sir Richard Blackmore considered it his duty to give some "Advice to the Poets, a Poem occasioned by the wonderful success of her Majesty's Arms, under the Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough, in Flanders". He does not mention Philips by name, but the reference is clear enough:

"Ye mercenary Wits, who Rime for Bread,
Ye unfledg'd Muses, this high Subject dread.
Let not th'inferior Race, who can indite
A pretty Prologue, or a sonnet write;
Tho' none so forward are, so bold as they,
Make on this Theme an Impotent Essay.
All who can raise a Shed, must not presume
To frame a Palace, or erect a Dome.
No more let Milton's Imitator dare
Torture our Language, to torment our Ear
With Numbers harsher than the Din of War.
Let him no more his horrid Muse employ
In uncouth Strains, pure English to destroy,
And from its Ruins, yell his hideous Joy.
Away, ye Triflers, who all Rule disdain,
Who in Pindaric sing Philander's Pain,
And Camps and Arms, in Paster-Fido's Strain.
Hence, vain Pretenders to the Song sublime,
Turners of Verse, and Finishers of Rime,
Who think with Fame Immortal you are Crown'd,
By flying Numbers, and harmonious Sound:
Who without Fire, and mindless of Design,
Ply hard the Pump, and labour every Line,
To make, like empty Clouds, your Diction shine.
So many Masters of this tunefull Skill,
With their melodious Songs the kingdom fill,

That to compleat Poetic Eloquence,
Nothing is wanting, but Design, and Sense."

The blank verse craze must have been fairly strong to call forth these acidities from Blackmore's pen.

Sir Richard's attack was repulsed in "A Panegyrick Epistle, (wherein is given an Impartial Character of the present English Poets) to Sir R. B. on his most Incomparable Incomprehensible Poem, call'd Advice to the Poets". It appeared on August 11th 1706 ¹⁾, and is ascribed to Philips by Elijah Fenton, Pope's assistant in the translation of the "Odyssey" in a letter to Thomas Warton the Elder ²⁾. On the day of publication, Fenton wrote to Thomas Warton: "I am glad to hear Mr. Philips will publish his 'Pomona'. Who prints it? I should be mightily obliged to you if you could get me a copy of his verses against Blackmore..... I'll never imitate Milton more till the author of 'Blenheim' be forgotten".

This poem has not yet been printed as Philips'. There is no reason to doubt Fenton's statement. Philips was, of course, the most interested party in the quarrel; it is significant that most contemporary poets are mentioned by name and come in for a share of satire in this early "Dunciad". Philips' name is not mentioned, though the reference to him is the last and most important:

"Then (tho' rejected by our heavn'ly Bard)
Great *Milton's Imitator* shall be heard;
Whose lofty Genius not alone affords
(As snarling *Momi* urge) bombastic words;
But with true Rage inspir'd he takes his flight,
And bravely reaches his old Masters Height.
The Muse unknown whose strong, but *factionous* Lay,
Pretends the Ages Vices to display;
Shall here his biting Wit and Satyr cease,

¹⁾ Daily Courant, August 11th, 1706.

²⁾ Wood, "Memoirs of Thomas Warton", p. 203.

Suspend his Malice, and consent to praise, —
Rhimer and *Walsh* shall o'er the Work preside,
 And ev'ry Muse's Rage and Fancy Guide."

The poem shows that Philips could handle the heroic couplet with ease, if he chose to try his hand at it and that he chose blank verse, not because it was an easy metre, but because he recognised its potentialities.

"Cyder" was published on Jan. 29th, 1707—8. It is Philips' *magnum opus*. He had started it at Oxford and seems to have worked at it continuously. The needs of his purse perhaps urged him to finish it now, for on Nov. 27th, 1707, Philips entered into an agreement with Jacob Tonson, the publisher. Philips was to receive forty guineas, with ten guineas for a second edition. In "Cyder" John Philips succeeds in adapting the manner of Virgil in the Georgics to the style of Milton and the result is a well-proportioned, humorous and picturesque poem. Philips observed English landscape closely and not the least of his merits is the strong local colour of "Cyder". In this he is independent of his original, Virgil's second Georgic, and the merit is his own. Lines like the following:

"The shepherd tends his flock, that daily crop
 Their verdant dinner from the mossy leaf
 When swelling buds their odorous foliage shed,
 And gently harden into fruit."

.....
 "But when the blackening clouds in sprinkling showers
 Distil, from the high summits down the rain
 Runs trickling, with the fertile moisture cheer'd
 The Orchards smile; joyous the farmers see
 Their thriving plants, and bless the heavenly dew".

.....
 "inclement winter dwells
 Contiguous, forthwith frosty blasts deface
 The blithsome year, trees of their shrivel'd fruits
 Are widow'd, dreary storms o'er all prevail!"

strongly remind us of Thomson's *Seasons*, both in their

descriptions of natural objects and in their diction. Philips' attitude towards his great predecessors in the realm of poetry is characteristic of the age. "Sacred Virgil" is the best poet; the verse of "tender Spenser" was "not debased by Fortune's frowns". His Toryism makes him bewail that Milton, "that first ennobled song with holy rapture", was not "among many faithless, strictly faithful found". On the whole Philips is quite right in admitting that he is Milton's "mean follower" and in stating in his opening lines:

"Thy gift, Pomona, in Miltonian Verse,
Adventurous, I presume to sing."

"Cyder" is as Miltonic as a poem can well be. The general plan is based upon Virgil, but metre, diction, phrases and even whole lines are borrowed from Milton. The only trouble is that Milton's greatness is conspicuous by its absence.

"Cyder" enjoyed a long popularity. It was the prototype of many blank verse poems on such subjects as Wine, The Chace, The Fleece, The Sugar-cane, etc. Philip Miller, the botanist, told Samuel Johnson that "there were many books written on the same subject in prose which do not contain so much truth as that poem"¹). Johnson himself was of opinion that "Philips' fame would endure as long as Blenheim is remembered or cyder drunk in England"¹); and Thomas Campbell said in his "Specimens of British Poets" "that he might have added: and as long as Tobacco shall be smoked". In 1744 there appeared what was styled the tenth edition of Philips' then acknowledged works, viz. "The Splendid Shilling", "Blenheim" and "Cyder". A splendid edition of "Cyder" was published as late as 1791 by Charles Dunster. It contained a huge number of "Notes, Provincial, Historical and Classical".

¹) "Lives of the Poets", — Life of Philips.

The strenuous life in London must have told upon Philips' health. He felt his strength declining and was unable to continue his newly planned poem on the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment. Edmund Smith may have seen the rudiments of it:

"Oh! had relenting Heav'n prolong'd his Days,
The tow'ring Bard had sung in nobler Lays,
How the last Trumpet wakes the lazy Dead,
How saints aloft the Cross triumphant spread;
.
Well might he sing the Day he could not fear,
And paint the Glories he was sure to wear." ¹⁾

Another Miltonian, Thomas Young, was to write on a similar subject later on. That interminable poem "The Complaint: or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality" (1742—1745) has certainly made up for any loss we may have sustained in the matter of Philips' poem.

In the summer of 1708 Philips' consumption, attended with asthma, grew so bad that, at the advice of his physicians, he went to Bath. His health improved a little here and in the autumn he visited his mother at Hereford. A collapse followed, however, and on the fifteenth of February, 1709 (N. S.), he died at his mother's house at Hereford. He was buried in Hereford Cathedral and his mother placed a stone over his grave. When the pavement was renovated in the nineteenth century, a brass plate with a bunch of apples engraved on it was placed on the grave of the "poet of English vintage". Simon Harcourt, Philips' patron and friend, erected a monument to his memory in Westminster Abbey in 1711. It is between the monuments of Barton Booth and John Roberts, next to those of Cowley, Longfellow and Dryden. The oft-told story that the words of the inscription: "*Uni in hoc laudis genere Miltono secundus, Primoque paene*"

¹⁾ "A Poem On the Death of Mr. John Philips." (1710).

Par", were obliterated by Dean Sprat, who was horrified to find Milton's name appearing in the Abbey, and were restored four years later by Atterbury, — must be discredited, since there is no trace of any obliteration or interpolation.

So far as I am aware none of Philips' works appeared with his name on the title-page during his life. It was only in 1714 that Curl published "The Works of Mr. John Philips". The volume contained "The Splendid Shilling"; "Bleinheim"; "Cyder"; and the Ode, as well as Ambrose Philips' Pastorals and the first edition of Sewell's Life of John Philips. The Life was reprinted the next year and was prefixed to most of the collected editions of Philips. It is unpretentious but accurate and later writers of Philips' life owed more to Sewell's Life than they were always careful to acknowledge. Thus the Tonsons published in 1762 "Poems attempted in the Style of Milton by Mr. John Philips. With a new Account of his Life and Writings", but it is hard to discover anything new in this.

The fact that Philips did not publish his works under his own name has naturally raised difficulties about their authorship. We have seen that "Cerealia" was only attributed to him in 1780. It is now by general consent acknowledged to be by Philips. Another work of a peculiar character was attributed to Philips in Bell's edition of "The Poets of Great Britain". It is there entitled: "The Fall of Chloe's Jordan". It had first been ascribed to Philips in the "Poetical Calendar" (1763)¹⁾ and has hitherto been supposed to have appeared first in print in 1754, when it was printed in the London Magazine²⁾. A folio edition of 1713, however, is in the present author's possession. This is a more complete version than the later

¹⁾ Vol. IV, p. 107.

²⁾ XXIII p. 85.

editions. The date 1713 brings the poem much nearer to Philips' lifetime. It may easily have circulated in M. S. till Baldwin deemed fit to publish it as part of the obscene literature in which the age was so prolific.

Philips' friends and early biographers carefully avoid mentioning the poem. It seems that Sewell had heard something about other works than the recognised four, for in his *Life* (1714) he wrote:

"By all the Enquiry I could make, I have not found that he ever wrote anything more than what we have mentioned, *nor indeed if there are any*, am I very solicitous about them, being convinced that these are all which he finish'd, and it would be an injury to his Ashes to print *any imperfect Sketches, which he never design'd for the Public.*"

Such a suppression is of course quite in the manner of eighteenth century biography, which aimed at the avoidance of anything "painful to the family". But life is various and art will stoop to conquer; and we may well suppose that "Rag"¹⁾ Smith's roaring circle at Oxford urged Philips to try his hand at a burlesque on a subject proposed by them. The last six lines of the poem contain a reference to the fall of "fam'd Eddystone near Plymouth Port". Since the first lighthouse was completed in 1700 and swept away by the great storm of 1703, we may conclude that the poem was written some time after November, 1703. It was therefore probably Philips' last Oxford poem.

This piece resembles the other Miltonic imitations of Philips so much that it can hardly be doubted that it is his work. This resemblance arises not because part of the poem is modelled upon "The Splendid Shilling", since any imitator might have done this, but because

¹⁾ Smith was known to his contemporaries as "Rag" Smith on account of his slovenly habits.

the general style, metre and diction, remind us so strongly of Philips' later works that it seems next to impossible that in the days, when no other Miltonian produced blank verse of a quality approaching Philips' in any respect, an unknown imitator should have written such Miltonic lines as early as 1704. Here is a specimen:

"And Winter keen in Breath blew shivering Cold,
Around the Globe, and Ty'd the voluble streams.
Some to the Chimneys warm Protection fly,
And fright the sooty Hearth with dreadful tale,
Of spright Nocturnal or adventurous Knight;
Some bid defiance to th'inclement Air,
Fir'd with the juicy flame of old *Falerne*."

Philips' beloved drink cider plays an important part in the catastrophe.

Two small poems, entitled "A Song" and "To A Lady with Milton's *Paradise Lost*" were added to the edition of "Cyder" which Hills published in 1708. The volume contains a third song as well, but this is stated to be by Mr. Cheek. The first two are quite possibly by Philips; the lady in both cases may have been Mary Meers.

To A

Lady

with *Milton's Paradise Lost*.

See here how bright the First-born Virgin shone!
And how the first Fond Lover was undone!
Such powerful words our charming Mother spoke,
As *Milton's* are, and such as *Yours* her Look.
Your's the best Copy of the Original Face,
Whose Beauty was to furnish all her Race.
Your Charms no Author can escape but he;
There's no way to be safe, but not to see.

Two other poems, both fairly long, were first attributed to John Philips by Dr. Harrach ¹⁾, They are "The Sylvan

¹⁾ John Philips. Diss. Leipzig, 1906.

Dream or the Mourning Muses" (1701) and "Ramelies" (1706). The first is an imitation of Milton's "Comus" and consists of an attack on contemporary poetry, a eulogy on King William III, the proposed invasion of England (1696) and the Peace of Ryswick (1697). The poet says that the poem is "the first that I've attempted." All this fits in with what we know of Philips' life. If he wrote it he must have started it shortly after he came up to Oxford. The latter half of the poem is a threnody on "Adonis dead", reminding us of "Lycidas". The copy in the British Museum has the name of John Philips written in an early hand on the title-page. It is clear enough that the work is by an admirer of Milton, but it is impossible to detect the work of John Philips in this dull mixture of pindarics and heroic couplets. Leonard Welsted may have ascribed "The Mourning Muses" to Philips in his "Poem to the Memory of the Incomparable Mr. Philips", (1710):

"But hear, oh hear, the Mourning Muse relate
Our once young Churchill's and our Gloster's Fate."

"Ramelies, A Poem" (1706) is in blank verse and written in imitation of "Bleinsheim". It has too little of the genuine Philips of "Cyder" to make it at all probable that it was his work. The copy of this particular poem on the battle of Ramillies in the British Museum bears the name "Rob. Wake" and the initials "R. W.", both in an early hand.

The justification of this chapter must lie in the historical position of John Philips rather than in the quality of his verse. We have seen what position Philips' blank verse poetry held in the literary estimate of the first decade of the eighteenth century. The poetry of the century is full of imitations and adaptations of "The Splendid Shilling" and "Cyder". Thomson and Somerville owe much

to him, the former perhaps more than he admitted, when he referred to the "facetious bard" ¹⁾, and to the "Silurian vats" of cider. Gay ²⁾, Tickell ³⁾, William Thompson ⁴⁾, Heard ⁵⁾, Crabbe ⁶⁾, and others praised Philips in poetical effusions. We may conclude that Philips led many to Milton. The following quotation from W. H. Roberts' "Poetical Epistle to Christopher Anstey, Esq., on the English Poets, chiefly those who have written in Blank Verse" (1773), illustrates once more the value that the century attached to Philips as well as to Milton:

"Poet of other times, to thee I bow
 With lowliest reverence. Oft thou tak'st my soul,
 And waf'st it by thy potent harmony
 To that empyreal mansion, where thine ear
 Caught the soft warblings of a Seraph's harp.
 What time the mighty visitant unlock'd
 The gates of Heav'n, and to the mental sight
 Display'd celestial scenes. She from the lyre
 With indignation tore the tinkling bells,
 And tun'd it to sublimest argument.
 Sooner the bird, that ushering in the spring
 Strikes the same notes with one unvarying pause,
 Shall vie with Philomel, when she pursues
 Her evening song thro' every winding maze
 Of melody, than rhyme shall soothe the soul
 With music sweet as thine. With vigilant eye
 Thee Philips watches, and, with taste refin'd
 Each precept culling from the Mantuan page,
 Disdains the Gothic bond. Silurian wines,
 Ennobled by his song, no more shall yield
 To Serin, or the strong Falernian juice,
 Beverage of Latian chiefs."

¹⁾ In later editions this was changed into "Pomona's bard".

²⁾ "Wine", 1709.

³⁾ "On the death of the Earl of Cadogan", "Oxford" (1707).

⁴⁾ "In the Midst of an Appletree over Mr. Philips' Cyder."

⁵⁾ "A Sentimental Journey to Bath, Bristol and their Environs" (1778).

⁶⁾ "The Borough" (1810).

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CHAPTER XI

EARLY MILTONIANS

"Could all this be forgotten. Yes, a scism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought men who could not understand
His glories: with a puling infant's force
They swayed about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves — ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious; beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of, — were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it, — no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepit standard out
Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large
The name of one Boileau!"

Thus John Keats in "Sleep and Beauty", the last poem of his first volume of poetry. It expresses, — with an uncommon union of poetic beauty and epigrammatic force, — all that the nineteenth century critics had to

say about the domination of the heroic couplet in "classical" poetry in general and in that of the eighteenth century in particular. To them heroic couplets and the Augustan age of English Poetry were synonymous. And indeed, how could it be otherwise? The nineteenth century approached the poets of the eighteenth only through those magnificent, many-volumed collections of "English" or "British" Poets that rested, securely bound in leather, on its bookcase shelves. Bell's (1777—92), Johnson's (1779—81), Anderson's (1793—1807), Park's (1815—19), and, last, but not least, Chalmers' (1810) Collections, these were the only gates leading to the eighteenth century fields of poesy. To most people of the nineteenth century they were but a desert of heroic couplets, numerous as the sands of Sahara. The best-known blank verse poems of the century were of course included in the collections. But in spite of the presence of blank verse, octosyllabics, Spenserian stanzas, pindarics and other metres, one everlasting *motif* dominates and overwhelms the vast symphony of these laborious collections, — the monotonous *motif* of the heroic couplet.

But these collections do not fairly represent eighteenth century poetry. The poets were mainly selected under the auspices of Dr. Samuel Johnson and the booksellers. As they had "determined to publish a Body of English Poetry", Johnson "was persuaded to promise them a Preface to the Works of each Author" ¹⁾. Johnson, with all his excellent qualities, was certainly no friend to unrhymed non-dramatic poetry. The result was that, while much eighteenth century verse in couplets was rescued from oblivion, much of the blank verse of the century was left to slumber securely in the great libraries, only to be unearthed in the twentieth century.

A fairer view of eighteenth century metres is obtained

¹⁾ Advertisement to Johnson's Lives.

by taking the "Miscellanies" and "Collections". Let us take the most popular of all, Dodsley's. The first edition of 1748 consisted of three volumes of poems, about one half of which are in heroic couplets. Vol. IV was published in 1755, vols. V and VI in 1758. In these three volumes only about one quarter of the space is reserved for poems in heroic couplets. This was about the middle of the century. The early Miscellanies show a greater proportion of couplets. Thus Steele's well-known "Poetical Miscellanies" (1714) has 318 pages, of which only 45 are not in couplets.

Over one thousand is the number of eighteenth century blank verse poems that Raymond Dexter Havens enumerates ¹⁾. This surely is no inconsiderable quantity. It may be objected that poetry should not be measured by the yard, or that statistics prove little in this case. But the compilation of lists like this is essential to a critical and historical perspective and prevents statements like the following: "It is not surprising that in the middle of the

¹⁾ R. D. Havens, "The Influence of Milton on English Poetry." p. 27: "For the unrimed poems were not only very popular, but very numerous. The first half of the eighteenth century saw some 350, and the next fifty years more than twice as many, not a few being works of considerable length."

The list of eighteenth century blank verse poems which I had compiled before the publication of Havens' elaborate study, has now become superfluous. The following poems from my list are not registered by Havens: — M. Lonsdale. — "The Loss of Liberty, or The Fall of Rome" (1727). W. Browne. — "From the Eleventh Book of the Iliad of Homer. In the style of Milton" (1727). G. S. — "The Statesman. A Poem Humbly inscribed to the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole". (1740). W. Thompson. — "On Mr. Pope's death. Written soon after his Death" (1744). C. Pitt — "On the Eternity of the Supreme Being" (1750). Margelina Scribelinda Macularia — "Old Woman's Dunciad" (1751). E. Moore — "A Hymn to Poverty" (1753?). W. Hamilton — "The Episode of the Thistle" (1748?). J. Armstrong — "Imitation of Shakespeare" (Winter) (1773). J. Graeme — "Curling" (before 1772). J. Graeme — "The Student". (before 1772). J. Graeme — "Damon or the Complaint and Hero and Leander" (before 1772). Anon. — "The Power of Fancy" (1773). Anon. — "The Libertine" (1784). Anon. "Spenser's Fairy Queen, attempted in blank verse. Canto I". (1774). Anon. "Spenser's Fairy Queen. Book I, cantos 1—4 attempted in blank verse" (1783).

I am convinced that patient research combined with some luck would discover many more. They are to be found in the most unlikely places, e. g. bound up with law reports.

century the heroic shook off its competitor and blank verse hardly came into competition again, till the deferred advent of Cowper" ¹⁾. As a matter of fact over four hundred blank verse poems were published between 1750 and 1785. The list also shows that John Philips' position as the first Miltonian is important, as he had practically no predecessors who were truly Miltonic. It proves also that his poetry was a medium through which many after him approached Milton. It further shows that it is hardly right to say that Milton "was shunned and practically neglected by the Augustans" ²⁾, that Milton's "name was a rallying-cry" for "the young romanticists" ²⁾ or that "during the earlier half of her [i. e. Mrs. Delany's (1700—1788)] lifetime, Pope reigned paramount in poetry and Milton was practically forgotten" ³⁾. Each age interprets the works of the great classics of art in its own way. The generation of 1808 did not regard Milton in the same light as did its predecessor of 1708, but there had been no neglect and no revival.

It is perfectly true that much of this blank verse is poetically on a low level. The same may safely be asserted of much of the couplet verse of the century. Yet its intrinsic quality does not detract one jot from its historic significance. The history of literature is the history of the voice of a nation, not the history of a number of isolated geniuses. These have their place in the history of art. But the historian of literature is concerned with the flux and reflux of influences and tendencies, of which the minor figures are essentially and peculiarly the mirrors. For a "great" author creates his own conventions; he exerts influence on the future only because he rejects

¹⁾ G. Saintsbury. — "A History of English Prosody." Vol. II. 1908. p. 495.

²⁾ W. L. Phelps. "The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement." p. 87.

³⁾ Austin Dobson, "Miscellanies", 1902. p. 110.

that of the past. Thus in literary history the critical importance of the minor exceeds that of the major figures, whose importance is aesthetic rather than historical. Moreover, as a symptom of popular interest and influence, the minor figures are still more valuable. Robert Burns, for instance, is still the most widely read poet in Scotland. He is the treasure of the humble. No later poet of standing has imitated him. But he has been and still is imitated by the obscure and local.

Seven years after the publication of the first edition of "Paradise Lost", it was deemed worthy to be condensed and dramatised into an opera: "The State of Innocence" (1674), by the most popular playwright of the day, John Dryden. No doubt he took great liberties with Milton (as with Shakespeare); yet he wrote under the portrait of Milton which prefaced "Paradise Lost" in the first folio and first illustrated edition (1688)¹:

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England, did adorn.
The first, in loftiness of thought surpass'd;
The next, in majesty; in both the last.
The force of nature could no further go;
To make a third, she join'd the former two.

Still, there were many who did not take up the modern attitude of indiscriminate praise. Nathaniel Lee's lines on Dryden's adaptation of "Paradise Lost" expressed the critical attitude of many, not only towards Milton, but towards Spenser and Shakespeare as well. These men were "golden", but not "refined".

"To the dead bard, your fame a little owes
For Milton did the wealthy mine disclose,
And rudely cast what you could well dispose;

¹) This edition is generally stated to be Tonson's. The one that I have seen is: "Paradise Lost, in Twelve Books. The Authour, John Milton. The Fourth Edition. Adorn'd with Sculptures. *Miles Flesher for Richard Bentley.* 1688.

And roughly drew, on an old-fashioned ground,
A chaos; for no perfect world was found,
Till through the heap your mighty genius shined:
He was the golden ore, which you refined.
He first beheld the beauteous rustic maid,
And to a place of strength the prize conveyed:
You took her thence, to Court this virgin brought,
Dressed with her gems, new-weaved her hard-spun thought,
And softest language, sweetest manners taught;
Till from a comet she a star did rise,
Not to affright, but please our wondering eyes."

Milton's prose works did some harm to his early reputation. Even the University of Oxford condemned Milton's "damnable Doctrine" in "The Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford past in their Convocation July 21, 1683, Against certain Pernicious Books and Damnable Doctrines Destructive to the Sacred Persons of Princes, their State and Government and all Humane Society" ¹⁾.

It was difficult for the generation that came immediately after Milton to separate the poet and the politician. Thus the reprinting of Milton's prose works in 1698 made the Tory poet Thomas Yalden write as follows in his copy of "Paradise Lost":

"These sacred lines with wonder we peruse
And praise the flights of a seraphic muse."

At the same time his political bigotry makes him continue:

"Till thy seditious prose provokes our rage
And soils the beauties of thy brightest page." ²⁾

But in spite of his bias he expatiates upon "majestic numbers", "immortal verse"; "as sweet thy voice", he writes, "as sweet thy lyre was strung". Though Yalden did not write a single line of blank verse and revelled

¹⁾ See p. 7 for the reference to Milton.

²⁾ Thomas Yalden: "On the Reprinting Milton's Prose Works, with his poems written in his Paradise Lost."

in the couplet, his critical attitude towards Milton's poetry is sound and modern.

The interest in Milton grew towards the end of the seventeenth century, when Toland wrote "The Life of John Milton" (1699) and "Amyntor, or a Defence of Milton's Life" (1699). John Hopkins "imitated" part of *Paradise Lost* "in Rhyme" in the same year, which was in itself a sign of reputation. The number of admiring references increased considerably about this time, and most Englishmen would hardly have considered as rank heresy John Dennis' statement in his "Grounds of Criticism in Poetry" (1704) that *Paradise Lost* was "the greatest Poem that was ever written by Man".

The first non-dramatic blank verse poem after Milton is the Earl of Roscommon's "Translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*" (1680). It is a frigid and unpoetical translation and the metre is as different from Milton's (and Shakespeare's) as it could well be. This blank verse, being mere wood, fully deserves all the early eighteenth century objections to blank verse in general.

Addison's "Milton's Stile Imitated in a Translation of a Story out of the Third *Aeneid*", was published three years after "The Splendid Shilling". It is probably only an experiment. Addison's papers on "*Paradise Lost*" show that he judged Milton to be equal, if not superior, to Homer or Virgil. He says remarkably little of Milton's lack of rhyme, but nevertheless he defends it in these words: "This and some other Innovations in the Measure of this Verse has varied his Numbers in such a manner, as makes them incapable of satiating the ear, and cloying the reader, which the same uniform measure would certainly have done, and which the perpetual returns of Rhime never fail to do in long narrative poems". That Addison chose the verse of Milton, when he resolved to try his hand at a translation of the national poem of imperial

Rome, was but natural. But he excludes other kinds of non-dramatic poetry; and his other translations, — Virgil's Fourth Georgic, Horace, Ode III, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, — are in heroic couplets.

The publication of Isaac Watts' "*Horae Lyricae*" in 1706 made two of his old college-friends blossom into blank verse. These were Joseph Standen and Henry Grove, who had been educated at Thomas Rowe's nonconformist academy with Watts. The blank verse poems of Standen and Grove were prefixed to the third edition of Watts' "*Horae Lyricae*" (1713). Some of Standen's lines are quite good:

"Hail, heaven-born Muse! that with celestial flame,
And high seraphic numbers, durst attempt
To gain thy native skies. No common theme
Merits thy thought, self-conscious of a soul
Superior, though on earth detain'd a while;
Like some propitious angel, that's design'd
A resident in this inferior orb,
To guide the wandering souls to heavenly bliss,
Thou seem'st; while thou their everlasting songs
Hast sung to mortal ears, and down to earth
Transferr'd the work of heaven; with thought sublime,
And high sonorous words, thou sweetly sing'st
To thy immortal lyre. Amaz'd, we view
The towering height stupendous, while thou soar'st
Above the reach of vulgar eyes or thought,
Hymning th'Eternal Father; as of old
When first th'Almighty from the dark abyss
Of everlasting night and silence call'd
The shining worlds with one creating word,
And rais'd from nothing all the heavenly hosts,
And with external glories fill'd the void,"

Grove's piece is entitled "To Mr. Watts on his Divine Poems". It is significant that Grove can keep up his blank verse for the space of twenty-one lines only, when he succumbs to temptation and continues in orthodox heroic couplets.

Watts himself practised the measure as well. His "Horae Lyricae" contains the following blank verse pieces: "A Sight on Christ"; "To Larissa"; "True Monarchy" (dated 1701); "True Courage"; and four others. He was a fluent writer of blank verse, which occasionally follows somewhat closely the Miltonic model. His opinion of Milton's poetry is worth noticing. In his long Preface of 1707 he says of Milton:

„In the "Essays without Rhyme" I have not set up Milton for a perfect pattern; though he shall be for ever honoured as our deliverer from the bondage. His works contain admirable and unequalled instances of bright and beautiful diction, as well as majesty and serenity of thought. There are several episodes in his longer works, that stand in supreme dignity without a rival; yet all that vast reverence with which I read *Paradise Lost*, cannot persuade me to be charmed with every page of it. The length of his periods, and sometimes of his parentheses, runs me out of breath. Some of his numbers seem too harsh and uneasy. I could never believe that roughness and obscurity added anything to the true grandeur of a poem; nor will I ever affect archaisms, exoticisms and a quaint uncouthness of speech, in order to become perfectly Miltonian. It is my opinion that blank verse may be written with all due elevation of thought in a modern style, without borrowing anything from Chaucer's tales or running back so far as the days of Colin the Shepherd and the reign of the Faery Queen. The oddness of an antique sound, gives but a false pleasure to the ear and abuses the true relish, even when it works delight."

Samuel Say and John Hughes, who were both early admirers and imitators of Milton, were at the same academy as Watts.

Prior's blank verse experiments can have exerted no influence in the eighteenth century, since they were not printed until the nineteenth. It would have been strange if Prior, who was an extremely versatile and excellent experimenter in metres, had not tried his hand at the metre of the poem which his contemporaries admired so much, "Paradise Lost".

John Gay's "Wine" was published in May, 1708 by "William Keble at the Black Spread Eagle in Westminster Hall". "Wine" is a direct imitation of Philips' "Splendid Shilling" and "Cyder". Gay read and studied Milton and Philips. Indeed, the opening lines of "Wine" are almost copied from "Paradise Lost":

"Of happiness terrestrial, and the source
Whence human pleasures flow, sing heavenly muse
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Inspir'd sublime, on Pegasean wing
By thee upborne, I draw Miltonic air".

But John Philips made him a poet and taught him the mock-heroic strain:

"Had the Oxonian bard thy praise rehears'd,
His muse had yet retain'd her wonted height;-
Such as of late o'er Blenheim's* field she soar'd
Aërial, now in Ariconian bogs*
She lies inglorious floundering, like her theme
Languid and faint, and on damp wing immerg'd
In acid juice * in vain attempts to rise."

In both "Cyder" and "Wine" the Dutch skippers with their fighting and drinking habits receive a share of satire, and the inevitable praise of Marlborough is not wanting in "Wine". As a work of art "Wine" is devoid of interest; the regularity of its metre is monotonous in the extreme and it lacks the enthusiasm and genuine burlesque of Philips.

After Philips' death the popularity of blank verse

* References to "Blenheim" and "Cyder".

declined. During his life John Dennis, the critic and bugbear of Pope, had written a large body of blank verse poems which enjoyed some popularity, but the blank verse poems published between 1709 and 1726 were not popular. Perusal of the twelve thousand lines of Thomas Newcomb's "The Last Judgment of Men and Angels" (1723) is enough to show why the poem, like most of its unrhymed contemporaries, was not reprinted. The explanation of all this would seem to be that two influences were working in opposite directions, both having a powerful effect on any poet or publisher who might desire to venture into the realm of blank verse.

The first of these was the comparative failure of Philips' "Bleinheim" and the success of Addison's "The Campaign". The signal victory of the couplet poem must have given a setback to blank verse. Philips continued in the same strain until his death, but the only man of any genius who at once followed in his footsteps was John Gay. But easy-going Gay lacked the spirit to continue the Miltonic tradition when he came under the influence of Pope. All his life Gay depended on his friends, in his art as well as in other things. In turn he wrote in imitation of Philips, in imitation of Pope, at the instigation of Pope and in imitation of Swift. Pope became acquainted with Gay about 1711. On July 15th of this year he wrote to Henry Cromwell, an acquaintance of Gay's: "Pray give my service to all my friends and to Mr. Gay in particular". We may assume that the influence of Pope would have been brought to bear on Gay, in case he should have had any plans for a new blank verse poem. Thus the failure of "Bleinheim", the most influential and authoritative poem in blank verse yet published, and the precepts and success of "An Essay on Criticism" (1711) and "The Rape of the Lock" (1712) combined to render blank verse poems odious to publishers and public alike.

"As a writer he is entitled to one praise of the highest kind: his mode of thinking, and of expressing his thoughts, is original". Thus Johnson in his *Life of Thomson*. Thomson's mode of thinking may have been original; his mode of expressing his thoughts was not. In metre and diction John Philips had anticipated Thomson by twenty years, Still, Thomson had genius, and Philips had only ingenuity. It is the poetic quality of his verse, not his originality that gives Thomson his importance in the history of Miltonism.

"Winter" appeared in March 1726 as a thin shilling folio of four hundred and fifty lines. In June an octavo edition of four hundred and sixty-three lines came out. In the complete quarto edition of "The Seasons" in 1730 it was extended to seven hundred and eighty-one lines and in 1744 the length was increased to one thousand and sixty-nine lines.

In March 1726 Thomson had been living in London for a year. That he did not come to London with "Winter" "in his pocket" is shown by his letter of September 1725 written from East Barnet near London to Dr. Cranstoun¹⁾:

"Nature delights me in every form, I am just now painting her in her most lugubrious dress for my own amusement, describing Winter as it presents itself. After my first proposal of the subject

I sing of Winter, and his gelid reign;
Nor let a ryming insect of the Spring,
Deem it a barren theme: to me 'tis full
Of manly charms; to me, who court the shade,
Whom the gay seasons suit not, and who shun
The glare of Summer. Welcome! kindred glooms!
Drear, awfull wintry horrors, welcome all, etc.

After this introduction, I say, which insists for a few

¹⁾ Published in the *European Magazine* for May 1797.



Engraving from "The Poets of Great Britain",
London, 1807.

lines further, I prosecute the purport of the following ones

Nor can I, O departing Summer! choose
But consecrate one pitying line to you;
Sing your last temper'd days, and sunny calms,
That cheer the spirits, and serene the soul.

Then terrible floods, and high winds, that usually happen about this time of year, and have already happen'd here, (I wish you have not felt them too dreadfully); the first produced the enclosed lines, the last are not completed. Mr. Rickleton's poem on Winter, which I still have, first put the design into my head. In it are some masterly strokes that awaken'd me — being only a present amusement 'tis ten to one but I drop it in whenever another fancy comes across".

We see then that it was Rickleton's poem on Winter that first suggested the composition of a "Season" to Thomson. Rickleton (or Riccaltoun) was probably the author of an anonymous poem "A Winter's Day" which appeared in 1726 in Savage's Miscellany. Thomson must therefore have had a manuscript copy of this work, just as in the case of the second poem which very probably influenced him in the selection of his general plan; — Armstrong's "Winter". This is a blank verse poem which was published only in 1770¹). The "advertisement to the publisher" tells us the story of this poem:

"The following Imitation of Shakespeare, was one of our Author's first attempts, in Poetry, made when he was very young: it helped to amuse the solitude of a winter past in a wild romantic country: and what is rather particular, was just finished when Mr. Thomson's celebrated Poem upon the same subject appeared. Mr. Thomson soon hearing of it, had the

¹) Miscellanies by John Armstrong in two volumes, 1770.

curiosity to procure a copy by the means of a common acquaintance. He shewed it to his poetical friends Mr. Mallet, Mr. Aaron Hill, and Dr. Young, who it seems did great honor to it, and the first mentioned gentleman wrote to one of his friends at Edinburgh, desiring that Author's leave to publish it, a request too flattering to youthful vanity to be resisted: but Mr. Mallet altered his mind, and this little piece has hitherto remained unpublished."

Armstrong's blank verse poem influenced Thomson in so far that he inserted in text B of "Winter" (June 1726) the description of the redbreast and the bear.

For the rest the influence of "Paradise Lost", "Il Penseroso" and Virgil's "Georgics" is clearly noticeable. That Thomson must have read Philips between 1726 and 1730 is shown by his adaptations of a few passages in "Cyder" in the 1730 edition of "Winter". Philips had written:

"sturdy Swains

In clean Array, for rustic Dance prepare,
Mixt with the Buxom Damsels; hand in hand
They frisk, and bound, and various Mazes weave,
Shaking their brawny Limbs, with uncouth Mien,
Transported, and sometimes, an oblique Leer
Dart on their Loves, sometimes, an hasty Kiss
Steal from unwary Lasses; they with Scorn,
And Neck reclin'd, resent the ravish'd Bliss."

Of this Thomson made:

"Or, frequent in the sounding hall, they wake
The rural gambol. Rustic mirth goes round:
The simple joke that takes the shepherd's heart,
Easily pleased; the long loud laugh, sincere;
The kiss, snatch'd hasty from the sidelong maid,
On purpose guardless, or pretending sleep;
The leap, the slap, the haul; and, shook to notes
Of native music, the respondent dance."

Thomson's metre and diction have been compared with those of Milton; we must now see to what extent Thomson's attitude towards Nature was due to his study of Milton's poetry.

Of Milton's place as a nature poet we need say but little here. Between Dryden's view, that Milton saw Nature through the spectacles of books, and Landor's that, if ever there was a poet who knew Nature, it was Milton, there is a wide enough margin. Milton saw Nature through the spectacles of books to this extent, that he often borrowed an epithet from books and that his physical disabilities did not enable him, in his later life, to see the details of Nature. Like many poets not bred in the country Milton had some difficulties with plants, as with the "twisted eglantine", which is identical with the sweetbriar and is not twisted. If it is true that lightning does not singe the tops of trees, or that the cowslip is not "wan", and if in "Lycidas" the flowers do not blossom at the time mentioned, the answer must be that Milton was handicapped by weakness of sight and by his town life. The result was that in his poetry the outlines of Nature were stressed rather than the details.

Such is the case in "The Seasons". But here the resemblance between Milton and Thomson, in their general attitude towards Nature, ceases; the subjects and scope of their poems are too divergent. If we desire to find the true attitude of "The Seasons" towards Nature, we should rather look forward than backward and compare him with Wordsworth rather than with Milton. The relation between Milton and Thomson in their attitude towards Nature has an important bearing on Miltonism, since it has been customary to regard Miltonism as a sort of early romanticism.

Thomson was born near the Scottish Border and spent his youth on the northern slope of the Scottish Cheviots.

Most of this country is wild and hilly and in Thomson's day there were no large towns in that part of Scotland. It was in this rugged and lonely district that Thomson gained his experience of natural scenery and it was from this region that he derived his conception of landscape. The key to Thomson's attitude towards Nature is to be found in his own experiences of the Cheviots and in his own nature. Thomson was exceedingly sensitive and easily affected by his surroundings. He was an indolent quietist; he was no wrestler with Nature like Wordsworth. His early attitude towards Nature was one of sheer joy and this attitude remained with him; it did not develop as Wordsworth's did. His mind was receptive, not creative. He selected certain broad impressions of external nature from his memory and described them. Thus in his description of scenery detail is lacking; his interest lay in the general impression; a realist he certainly was not. His interest in Nature was largely an intellectual interest. Nature was not regarded by him as an active teacher, nor was his motto: "We must still be seeking".

Thomson's theological studies at Edinburgh must have awakened in him an interest in Man. Hence the important place which Man takes up in his attitude towards Nature. He does not wish to describe Nature for her own sake, but Nature as she affects Man and himself. Like Wordsworth, Thomson takes Nature in its widest sense and includes Man. In "The Prelude" Wordsworth describes how he was led through love of Nature to love of Man and how Man is his main subject. Man is the main subject of Thomson too, though in him Nature comes after Man. Thomson's dominant interest in Man is the cause of his tales and of his digressions on social problems, such as the address to the jail-committee. Thomson is content to state and show the place of Man in Nature, but he does not try to discover the secrets

of Nature. Thomson never delighted in the solitude of Nature; he reached no farther than the "sacred love of Nature" and never attained to Wordsworth's "sacred lore of Nature". Thomson's attitude towards Nature was the common attitude of the Nature poets of the eighteenth century; their theory went no deeper than this; — "Nature is here for us to enjoy it ; let us enjoy it". The profounder implications of the observation of Nature they did not wish to search, nor did they require any help from Nature to assist them to face the buffetings of the world.

The fact that Thomson, the Nature poet, was also Thomson, the Miltonian, had important consequences. The connection between Nature Poetry and blank verse remained. From Somerville's "The Chace" (1730) to Cowper's "The Task" (1785), many of the blank verse poems attempted nature descriptions with varying success.

The appearance of the four instalments of "The Seasons" opened the flood gates of blank verse. The stream was continuous and voluminous and it is hardly necessary to treat the poems in detail here.

But William Somerville, who, according to Johnson "writes very well for a gentleman", should not be passed over, because in him we find so clearly exemplified what might be proved from the work of most Miltonians of the first half of the eighteenth century, that "Miltonism" by no means implies romanticism.

Somerville was a professed admirer of Milton, Philips, Thomson, Addison ¹⁾, and Pope ²⁾. He wrote in Miltonian verse, heroic couplets, heroic stanzas, octosyllabic couplets and doggerel. He is a genuine lover of the country, and a lover of Pope. He expresses his admiration for Allan

¹⁾ See his poem: "To Mr. Addison."

²⁾ See his poem: "To the Author of the Essay on Man."

Ramsay's works ¹⁾, and for Denham's "Cooper's Hill" ²⁾. Like his contemporaries Somerville was not conscious of any contrast between the "romantic" and the "classic"; such vestiges of romanticism as appear in his work are altogether unconscious. Romanticism is not a form, but an attitude, of which the essential quality is its conscious sensibility to impression. The romantic may employ the same objective material as the classic; the difference lies in the subjective manipulation of that material.

The conventional conception of the influence of Milton's earlier poetry is typified by the following summary of Professor Beers (1899): "The influence of Milton's Minor Poetry became noticeable in the fifth decade of the century, and in the work of a new group of lyrical poets, Collins, Gray, Mason and the brothers Joseph and Thomas Warton. To all of these Milton was master" ³⁾. The brilliant research work done in this direction in the United States of America, notably by R. D. Havens ⁴⁾, J. W. Good ⁵⁾ and G. Sherburn ⁶⁾ has led to better and broader views.

The influence of Milton's minor poetry on the eighteenth century was profound. Sherburn has collected phrasal echoes and critical comments which prove a widespread popularity of the minor poems. From the poets of the seventeenth century he has been able to find parallels in the poems of eight authors only. But the first

¹⁾ See his poems: "An Epistle to Allan Ramsay" and "To Allan Ramsay."

²⁾ The Chace, Book III; "Tread with respectful awe Windsor's green glades, where Denham, tuneful bard, Charm'd once the listening Dryads, with his song sublimely sweet."

³⁾ "History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth century". (1899) p. 151.

⁴⁾ R. D. Havens — "Seventeenth century Notices of Milton and Early Reputation of Paradise Lost." Englische Studien 1909. R. D. Havens — "The Influence of Milton on English Poetry." 1922.

⁵⁾ J. W. Good — "Studies in Milton Tradition." University of Illinois Studies in Languages and Literature. Vol. 1, nos. 3 and 4, 1915.

⁶⁾ G. Sherburn — "The early popularity of Milton's Minor Poems." Modern Philology, Vol. XVII, 1919—1920, p. 259, 515.

decade of the eighteenth century has yielded about two dozen parallels from about twelve different sources, the second decade, thirty-five from twenty-five sources, the third sixty-five from over thirty sources. We cannot do better than quote Sherburn's conclusions here:

"I have cited almost a hundred writers who showed consciousness of these (i. e. the minor) poems in the first century of their existence, from these ninety odd persons almost two hundred works have been cited and in these only three passages have taken a slighting attitude towards the poems — those by Saumaire, Dryden and William Benson. Considering the size of the reading public and the state of letters in general, these two hundred poems, biographies, letters, essays, etc. seem a not inconsiderable amount. Nor is the quality of the attention given the poems less impressive than the quantity. It is probable that after the Restoration, Milton's literary credit temporarily declined, as his political credit certainly did; but after the period when Toland's life was written, the reputation of the minor poems is undoubted."

Still, the minor poems exerted less influence than "Paradise Lost". Whereas a hundred and ninety-six poems were affected by *Paradise Lost* before 1742, only "forty-one were significantly influenced by the minor pieces before that year"¹⁾. From 1740 to 1750 forty-one poems were affected by "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso", "from 1750 to 1760, forty-six; 1760 to 1770, seventy-one; 1770 to 1780, sixty-eight; 1780 to 1790, seventy-five; 1790 to 1800, sixty-one"¹⁾.

The influence of Milton's octosyllabic poems was not restricted to phrasal borrowings. The Wartons, Mason, Collins and Gray owed a great part of their poetic inspiration to them. The year 1746 saw the publication of Collins'

¹⁾ R. D. Havens, "Milton's influence on English Poetry". p. 9, p. 469.

Odes and of Joseph Warton's "Odes on Several Subjects". From that date for half a century "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" enjoyed a popularity such as they have never attained since. But long before 1746 there had been men to whom Milton's poems in the romantic mood had been an inspiration and a model.

John Hughes, Spenser's editor, was educated in a dissenting academy, where he was "a fellow-student with Dr. Isaac Watts, Mr. Samuel Say, and other persons of eminence"¹). We have seen how, early in the century, there was a sort of Milton cult at this academy. Hughes was an apt pupil. He translated two of Horace's Odes (1697) and prefixed to each a stanza in imitation of Milton's octosyllabics. The first runs as follows:

Hence, slavish Fear! thy Stygian wings display!
 Thou ugly fiend of Hell, away!
 Wrapp'd in thick clouds, and shades of night,
 To conscious souls direct thy flight!
 There brood on guilt, fix there a loath'd embrace,
 And propagate vain terrours, frights,
 Dreams, goblins, and imagin'd sprights,
 Thy visionary tribe, thy black and monstrous race.

The lines prefixed to the second translation are:

Indulgent Quiet! power serene,
 Mother of Peace, and Joy, and Love!
 O say, thou calm propitious queen,
 Say, in what solitary grove,
 Within what hollow rock, or winding cell,
 By human eyes unseen,
 Like some retreated Druid, dost thou dwell?
 And why, illusive goddess! why
 When we thy mansions would surround,
 Why dost thou lead us through enchanted ground,
 To mock our vain research, and from our wishes fly?

¹) Chalmers' English Poets X, p. 3.

In "The Picture" (1704) Hughes imitated "L'Allegro" with considerable effect:

Come, my Muse, a Venus draw;
Not the same the Grecians saw,
By the fam'd Apelles wrought,
Beauteous offspring of his thought.
No fantastic goddess mine,
Fiction far she does outshine.

Queen of fancy! hither bring
On thy gaudy-feather'd wing
All the beauties of the Spring.
Like the bee's industrious pains
To collect his golden gains,
So from every flower and plant
Gather first th'immortal paint.
Fetch me lilies, fetch me roses,
Daisies, violets, cowslip-posies,
Amaranthus, parrot-pride,
Woodbines, pinks, and what beside
Does th'embroidered meads adorn;
Where the fawns and satyrs play
In the merry month of May.
Steal the blush of opening morn;
Borrow Cynthia's silver white,
When she shines at noon of night,
Free from clouds to veil her light.

Hughes was not only Miltonic; he also possessed many of the qualities of romance. He wrote admirable songs; his love of nature and of the countryside was genuine; he devoted loving care to Spenser and in his opera "Calypso and Telemachus" he attempted to show "that the English language might be very happily adapted to music" ¹).

Hughes was soon followed by others, also by Parnell, whose "Hymn on Contentment" appeared in Steele's "Poetical Miscellanies" (1714), by Nicholas Rowe, and by Hinchliffe, author of "The Seasons" (Spring, Summer,

¹) Johnson, Life of Hughes.

Autumn and Winter) (1718). The last work is meant to be written in octosyllabic couplets and there are many echoes from "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso". It is not likely that Thomson knew it.

We shall restrict ourselves to a discussion of two early eighteenth century poems that were modelled upon Milton's minor poetry and that are important from the point of view of historical development, viz.: Parnell's "A Night Piece on Death" (1722), published by Pope, and Dyer's "Grongar Hill" (1726).

"A Night Piece on Death" was written under the influence of "Il Penseroso". It is in octosyllabic couplets, which often remind us of Milton's varied lines without, of course, attaining their music, as in:

"See the glad Scene unfolding wide,
Clap the glad Wing and tow'r away,
And mingle with the Blaze of Day.

or in

"Arms, Angels, Epitaphs and Bones,
These (all the poor Remains of State)."

Line thirty-five of "Il Penseroso" was the model of lines seventy-one and seventy-two in the Night Piece.

"Why, then, the flowring sable Stoles
Deep pendant Cypress, mourning Poles."

Milton's "divinest Melancholy" had become a "melancholy state" in Parnell, which melancholy state has much more of morbid sadness than Milton's. There is a marked difference in this respect and the funereal tone of "The Night Piece", which exercised considerable influence on Young, Blair and Gray, may be accounted for by Parnell's own mood. Gilfillan in his edition of Parnell (1851) speaks of the latter's "morbid temperament and mortified feelings" and says that "as soon as each London furlough

was expired he returned to Ireland jaded and dispirited, and there took delight in nursing his melancholy".

The "Night Piece of Death" is the first "churchyard" poem of the eighteenth century. Lines like:

"And think, as softly-sad you tread
Above the venerable Dead,
Time was, like thee they Life possest,
And Time shall be, that thou shalt Rest.
Those graves, with bending Osier bound
That nameless heave the crumbled Ground,
Quick to the glancing thought disclose,
Where *Toil* and *Poverty* repose".

played a part in fostering that mood of romanticism which loved gloom, sadness and "Weltschmerz". The last four lines show Gray's debt to Parnell.

This sequence of influences might perhaps suggest that "Il Penseroso" is the primal source of what has been variously described as "the literature of Melancholy", the "graveyard school", the "poetry of the churchyard". However, the chief exponents, Young and Blair, were not influenced by "Il Penseroso". The difference in atmosphere between this poem and Blair's "Grave" (1743) or Young's "Night Thoughts" (1742—45) is too great for us to admit any direct inspiration.

Goldsmith preferred "The Night Piece" to Gray's "Elegy", but Samuel Johnson's common sense got the better of his dislike for Gray. "The Night Piece on Death is indirectly preferred by Goldsmith to Gray's Churchyard, but in my opinion, Gray has the advantage in dignity, variety and originality of sentiment" ¹⁾).

Parnell's attitude towards Nature is one of genuine admiration of simple things. The lines:

The slumbering Breeze forgets to breathe
The Lake is smooth and clear beneath,

¹⁾ Life of Parnell.

from "The Night Piece", and

Treads soft and lonesome o'er the Vales,
 Sees Daisies open, Rivers run,
 * * * * *
 Converse with Stars above, and know
 All Nature in its Forms below,

from "A Hymn on Contentment", shown an almost Wordsworthian simplicity.

The opening lines of his "Hymn for Morning", "Hymn for Noon", and "Hymn for Evening", might have been written by Cowper, to judge by their pictures of natural beauty.

John Dyer's "Grongar Hill" was published in 1726 in "A Miscellany of Poems and Translations by several hands of Richard Savage". Thomson's "Winter" had just been published. The same year "Grongar Hill" was reprinted separately in a more correct form.

This local poem, describing the view from Grongar Hill on the river Towey in Cardigan, is written, as far as the subject is concerned, in imitation of Denham's "Cooper's Hill", Pope's "Windsor Forest" and Garth's "Claremont". But for his inspiration and versification Dyer went straight to "L'Allegro". The poem is written in octosyllabic couplets, mainly iambic, but partly trochaic and often catalectic, as in:

"Silent nymph, with curious eye.
 Who, the purple evening lie
 On the mountain's lonely van
 Beyond the noise of busy man".

or in:

"And see the rivers how they run
 Thro' woods and meads, in shade and sun
 Sometimes swift, sometimes slow
 Wave succeeding wave, they go,
 A various journey to the deep,
 Like human life, in endless sleep."

But unlike Milton's octosyllabics, Dyer's are nearly all end-stopt; only nine of the one hundred and fifty-eight lines show enjambment. In this and in the six triplets the influence of Swift and Prior is traceable.

"Grongar Hill" deserves a place in the history of the romantic movement of the eighteenth century not only on account of its form, but even more so by virtue of its attitude towards Nature. In simple and sincere language, Dyer gives us what might be called a water-colour sketch of a wide expanse of country on a day of sunshine. It is true that the colours have been put on very thinly, but the face of all Nature is gay; there is a keen, if not profound, ecstasy in the thrill of field and stream; there is sheer joy in the beauty of external Nature.

"And often, by the
 murm'ring rill,
Hears the thrush,
 while all is still,
Within the groves
 of Grongar Hill."

Perhaps no poet has been more successful in command of atmospheric effect than Dyer. We are reminded of his early ambition and recognise the artist in "Grongar Hill", an artist who spurns conventionalities and who, though he may not yet have his eye fixed on the object, does at any rate come nearer to that ideal of art than his contemporaries. Dyer has not much tenacity of flight and little imagination, but the repeated references to the magnificence of Welsh mountain scenery show that Thomson, the son of the Cheviots, had a kindred spirit in the Welsh author of "Grongar Hill". Both Thomson and Dyer derive their impressions of nature direct from their early surroundings rather than by way of Milton.

Yet Dyer was by no means a revolutionary. A true son

of his age, he indulges in moralising with as great a zest as the most Horatian of the Carolines:

"A little rule, a little sway
A sunbeam on a winter's day
Is all the proud and mighty have
Between the cradle and the grave".

Milton too had intermixed moral reflections with his descriptions of natural objects, but Dyer's moralising altogether lacks the force and majesty which that of Milton derived from its religious background; its charm is the more suave and superficial grace of the Augustan facility.

The importance of Parnell and Dyer in the history of the romantic movement may be judged by the fact that their poems won lavish praise. Their pensive imagination seems to have appealed to many romantics. Gray said that Dyer "has more imagination than almost any of our number" ¹⁾. David Hume wrote: "It is sufficient to run over Cowley once; but Parnell, after the fiftieth reading, is as fresh as at first" ²⁾. Wordsworth wrote a sonnet in praise of Dyer, and said of him: "I am not sure that he is not in imagination superior to any writer after Milton" ³⁾. Byron knew "Grongar Hill" and Samuel Johnson said of it "the scenes which it displays are so pleasing, the images which they raise so welcome to the mind and the reflections of the writer so consonant with the general sense or experience of mankind, that when it is once read, it will be read again" ⁴⁾.

Many imitations of Milton's octosyllabics continued to be written, till the fifth decade of the century saw the

¹⁾ Gray's Works. ed. Gosse, letter LXXXIV.

²⁾ Hume, On Simplicity and Refinement in Writing.

³⁾ Miscellaneous Sonnets, XVII. To the Poet John Dyer. In his poem Wordsworth addresses Dyer as "Bard of the Fleece", but praises him as nature-poet and repeats the contents of the last two lines of "Grongar Hill."

⁴⁾ Johnson's Lives of The Poets. Ed. 1783. vol. IV. p. 321.

great Milton worship, of which the Wartons were prophets and Milton's minor poems the bible. It is not necessary to consider these imitations in detail. It is enough if we bear in mind that in 1726, when Pope had still eighteen years to live, Johnson was a boy of seventeen and Goldsmith had not yet been born, both Milton's major and minor poems inspired two works in blank verse and octosyllabics, which served for enjoyment and for example to very many. It was as if a hidden spring, bearing something of the freshness and colour of the Elizabethan renaissance, still troubled the gleaming but stagnant surface of the Augustan calm.

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"All these, and all that els the Comick Stage,
With seasoned wit and goodly pleasance-graved;
By which man's life is his likest image,
Was limned forth, are wholly now defaced;
And those sweet wits which wont the like to frame,
Are now despized and made a laughing game.
And he the man whom nature self had made
To mock herself, and truth to imitate
With kindly counter under mimick shade.
Our pleasant Willy, ah, is dead of late".

From Edmund Spenser's "Complaints" (1591). This lamentation over the perversion of public taste was published in Shakespeare's twenty-eighth year. Thus the first reference by name to Shakespeare already complains of lack of appreciation.

CHAPTER XII

THE INFLUENCE OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA AND THE ELIZABETHAN SONNET ON THE RISE OF MODERN ROMANTICISM

The influence of Shakespeare on the rise of modern romanticism was less than might at first sight be expected. The love of his drama kept alive the romantic spirit on the stage from the days of Betterton down to those of the Kembles. Nicholas Rowe, the devoted Shakespearean scholar, wrote dramas with a genuine romantic spirit between 1700 and 1715, but on the whole the influence of Shakespeare was rather of a general nature than specifically romantic. His versification influenced Young and Blair, but the bulk of eighteenth century blank verse is Miltonic. Shakespeare's influence on modern romanticism fell below Milton's, or even Spenser's. There are in most poets echoes of the diligence with which the century read Shakespeare's works, but the influence of his verse did not divide the century into two camps, as did that of Milton, and, to a less extent, that of Spenser. The work of Shakespeare was of too comprehensive and universal a quality to become the peculiar badge of any literary coterie.

The attitude of the ages of Dryden and Pope towards Shakespeare is of a threefold nature. There were those whose position was wholly hostile, mainly because they condemned the stage and dramatic poetry altogether; there were those who gave him unstinted praise. Between these two extremes were the apathetic, whose attitude was

one of indifference. We shall illustrate the first two positions by one or two contemporary opinions.

In the eyes of Samuel Pepys "The Tempest" had "no great wit" and "Midsummer Night's Dream" was "the most insipid and ridiculous play". Nevertheless Pepys witnessed thirty-six performances of twelve of Shakespeare's plays between October 1660 and February 1668. Pepys joined theoretical condemnation to practical appreciation. Thomas Rymer condemned Shakespeare altogether in "The Tragedies of the Last Age" (1692), the most serious attack on the Elizabethan stage. Rymer promised to examine six plays, viz., Fletcher's 'Rollo', 'King or no King', and 'Maid's Tragedy', Shakespeare's 'Othello' and 'Julius Caesar', and Ben Jonson's 'Catiline', as well as Milton's 'Paradise Lost', 'which some are pleased to call a poem'. But he confined his attention to the first three of the plays only. He returned to the attack on 'Othello' in 'A Short View of Tragedy: its Original Excellency and Corruption, with some Reflections on Shakespeare and other Practitioners for the Stage' (1693). In Rymer's eyes 'Othello' was 'a bloody farce without salt or savour' ¹⁾.

In discussing this plays, he says:

"In the Neighing of a horse, or in the Growling of a Mastiff, there is a meaning, there is as lively expression, and may I say, more humanity, than many times in the tragical flights of Shakespeare?" ²⁾

And again:

"There is not a monkey but understands Nature better; not a Pug in Barbary that has not a truer taste of things." ³⁾

The number of admiring references far surpasses that of the unfavourable criticisms. Of all the tributes to Shake-

¹⁾ p. 146.

²⁾ p. 95.

³⁾ p. 114.

speare the most generous and noble is to be found in John Dryden's prologue to his "Tempest or the Enchanted Isle":

"Shakespeare, who (taught by none) did first impart
To Fletcher Wit, to labouring Jonson, Art

.
If they have since outwrit all other men,
'Tis with the drops which fell from Shakespeare's pen.
The Storm which vanish'd on the Neighb'ring shore
Was taught by Shakespeare's Tempest first to roar.
That innocence and beauty which did smile
In Fletcher, grew on this enchanted Isle.
But Shakespeare's Magick could not copy'd be --
Within that Circle none durst walk but he".

For the many allusions to Shakespeare in the ages of Dryden and Pope we must refer to the standard commentaries. We subjoin an instructive criticism contained in Cuthbert Constable's hitherto unpublished manuscript of "An Essay Towards a New English Dictionary" (1720) ¹⁾

"We ought to follow Shakespear and Fletcher in their plots so far only as they have copy'd the excellencies of those who invented and brought to perfection dramatic poetry."

"The Art of Poetry had been better prais'd than study'd here in England, wherein Shakespear who created the Stage among us, had rather written happily, than knowingly and justly.

'Tis almost a miracle that Shakespear who began dramatic poetry amongst us, untaught by any and as Ben Johnson tells us, without learning, should by the force of his own genius perform so much, that in a manner he has left no praise for any that come after him."

"Shakespear first invented blank verse into which the English tongue so naturally slides that in writing prose

¹⁾ The quotations are taken from Messrs. Maggs Bros. Catalogue of Shakespeare Books (1923).

'tis hardly to be avoided, and therefore I admire some men should perpetually stumble in a way so easie. The great easiness of blank verse, renders the Poet too luxuriant; he is tempted to say many things, which might better be omitted, or at least shut up in fewer words. Spencer's verses are so numerous, so various, and so harmonious, that only Virgil, whom he perfectly imitated, has surpass'd him, among ye Romans; and only Waller among the English. Neither will I justifie Milton for his blank verse, tho' I may excuse him, by the example of Hannibal Caro, and other Italians, who have us'd it; for what ever causes he alledges for the abolishing of Rhyme (which I have not now the leisure to examine) his own particular reason is plainly this, that Rhyme was not his talent, he had neither the ease of doing it nor the graces of it; which is manifest in his *Juvenilia*, or verses writ in his youth; where his Rhyme is always constrain'd and forc'd, and comes hardly from him at an age when the soul is most pliant; and the passion of love, makes almost every man a Rhimer."

Cuthbert Constable was a celebrated antiquary and accomplished scholar. His criticisms display an attitude towards Shakespeare, Milton and blank verse, which is often supposed to be the common, or even only attitude of the age. We have seen that there were plenty of men of a different opinion.

In the days of Dryden and Pope many admired Shakespeare for his specifically romantic qualities. To this extent Shakespeare helped to keep the Elizabethan romantic tradition alive. To give an instance, Robert Gould in his "Poems, chiefly consisting of Satyrs and Satyrical Epistles" (1689) has the following interesting summary of the romantic side of Shakespeare's verse in "A Satyr against the Playhouse":

"But, if in what's sublime you take delight,
Lay Shakespeare, Ben, and Fletcher in your sight,
Where Human Actions are with Life exprest,
Vertue extoll'd, and vice as much deprest.
There the kind Lovers modestly complain,
So passionate, you see their inmost pain,
Pity and wish their Love not placed in vain.
There Wit and Art, and Nature you may see
In all their statliest Dress and Bravery.
None e'er yet wrote, or e'er will write again,
So lofty things in such a Heavenly strain!
Whene'er I Hamlet or Othello read,
My hair stands up, and my Nerves shrink with dread,
Pity and fear raise my concern still higher,
Till, betwixt the two, I'm ready to expire!
When cursed Iago, cruelly, I see
Work up the noble Moore to Jealousie,
How cunningly the villain weaves his sin,
And how the other takes the Poisin in;
Or when I hear his God-like Romans rage,
And by what just degrees he does assuage
Their fiery temper, recollect their Thoughts.
Make 'em both weep, make 'em both own their Faults.
When these and other such-like scenes I scan
'Tis then, great Soul, I think thee more than Man!
Homer was blind, yet could all Nature see;
Thou wert unlearned, yet knew as much as He!
In Timon, Lear, the Tempest, we may find
Vast Images of thy unbounded mind;
These have been altered by our Poets now,
And with success too, that we must allow;
Third days they get when part of thee is shown
Which they but seldom do when all's their own."

Rowe, editor and first biographer of Shakespeare (1709), refers to Shakespeare's fairies, witches and ghosts as follows:

"But certainly the greatness of this author's genius do's no where so much appear, as where he gives his imagination an entire loose, and raises his fancy to a flight above mankind and the limits of the visible world



NICHOLAS ROWE

From a painting by Kneller

Such are his attempts in *The Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*."

Rowe was the author of that highly sentimental and romantic tragedy "The Fair Penitent" (1703), adapted from Massinger's "Fatal Dowry". This play was one of the most popular dramas of the eighteenth century. The "gay Lothario" acquired a proverbial reputation; the heroine Calista was a favourite character with contemporary theatrical stars; the hero and heroine were the originals of Richardson's "Clarissa Harlowe"; and Johnson said of it: "There is scarcely any work of any poet at once so interesting by the fable and so delightful in the language."

Shakespeare was abundantly criticised, adapted and "improved" by the Augustans. But he was also seen in the true, romantic light by many of "the age of the couplet". There was plenty of neglect, as indeed there is in our own days. The following complaint from Richard Wilkenson's prologue to "Vice Reclaim'd or The Passionate Mistress, A Comedy" (1703), is as true to-day as in the early days of Queen Anne's reign:

"Humour which one prevailed is laid aside,
And cant appear but by some Foreign aid:
Singing and Dancing is the only Grace,
And Shakespeare's well wrought Scenes will have no Place."

As with Shakespeare, so it was with the other Elizabethan dramatists. The editions of the chief playwrights, the frequent adaptations and imitations, the number of references, all these make it impossible for us to say that the ages of Dryden and Pope were indifferent to this side of Elizabethan romance.

The Elizabethan sonnets do not contain many of the qualities of romance. Their stock conceits, their conventionality of subject and diction could not greatly appeal to any Augustan in a romantic mood. In the case of Milton's sonnets, the restraint and flawlessness makes them

rather classic than romantic. The eighteenth century as a whole did not of course neglect the sonnet, since it published at least two thousand five hundred ¹⁾. But the influence which it exerted on the rise of early modern romanticism was slight, for only thirteen poets used the form between 1660 and 1740 ²⁾. The interest in sonnets began about the latter year and became so great that the movement fully deserves to be called "the renascence of the sonnet". However, this revival played only a small part in the rise of Modern Romanticism. Several of the specimens of the Spenserian stanza and Miltonic blank verse have intrinsic as well as romantic values. In reading early eighteenth century sonnets one does not discover much that can be called genuine romantic poetry. The theme is generally treated in the manner of Milton; there is frequent invocation of persons, and a prevalent air of sobriety, even of stolidity. In Nature, however, many sonnets published after 1740 take a great interest; yet here too, there is but an echo of what had gone before in other verse-forms. Compared with the influence of "The Faerie Queene", "Paradise Lost", "Il Penseroso" and "L'Allegro", the romantic influence of the Elizabethan and Miltonic sonnets was slight. The sonnet was frequently practised as a means of escape from the couplet and as a form of Miltonic imitation. Its influence only became strong at a time when Elizabethan Romanticism had merged into romanticism of the modern type and when medieval romance as well as the new conception of Nature had contributed largely to the development of that highly specialised type, — Modern Romance.

¹⁾ See R. D. Havens, "Milton's Influence on English Poetry", p. p. 523, 685.

²⁾ See ditto, p. 488.

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TO MELANCHOLY

Spirit of love and sorrow, — hail!
Thy solemn voice from far I hear,
Mingling with Evening's dying gale,
Hail, with this sadly-pleasing tear!

Oh, at this still, this lonely hour,
Thine own sweet hour of closing day,
Awake thy lute, whose charming power
Shall call up Fancy to obey.

To paint the wild romantic dream,
That meets the poet's musing eye,
As on the bank of shadowy stream
He breathes to her the fervid sigh.

O lonely spirit! let thy song
Lead me through all thy sacred haunt;
The minster's moonlight aisles along,
Where spectres raise the midnight chaunt.

I hear their dirges faintly swell!
Then sink at once in silence drear,
While, from the pillar'd cloister's cell,
Dimly their gliding forms appear!

ANN RADCLIFFE (1764—1823).

CHAPTER XIII

THE LITERATURE OF GLOOM

"The literature of melancholy must certainly be considered an important factor in the beginnings of Romanticism. In its subjective tone, in its vague aspiration, fondness for solitude and gloomy meditation, it was quite different from the tone of Augustan literature; and its master was none other than Milton."¹)

This is an admirable summary of an important side of eighteenth century romanticism. The conclusion that Milton was the master of this literature, will however scarcely bear detailed investigation. If the funereal poetry of the century can be said at all to have had any masters, those masters were Shakespeare, Steele and Addison rather than Milton. In many instances the form and in some the diction of the poems of Gloom was based on Milton, but the gloom itself, the "last day", the "grave" and the "melancholy" owe little to Milton.

The literature of Gloom, which flourished in the eighteenth century, divides itself into three different types, according as it dwelt on "Immortality" and "The Last Day", on "The Grave", or on "pleasing Melancholy". Of course, these three types frequently blend; yet their origins are different. The first reaches its culmination in Young's "Night Thoughts" (1742—5), the second in Blair's "Grave" (1743), the most characteristic poem of the whole school. The last of the three types, which was powerfully aided by

¹) W. L. Phelps. The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement.

the first two, spread all over Europe and developed, towards the end of the eighteenth century and in the early years of the nineteenth century, into "worldweariness" or "Weltschmerz".

The theme of the immortality of the soul is as old as poetry itself. Poems on this subject were frequently written both before and after the Restoration. We shall refer to three of the most influential works.

Sir John Davies (1569—1626), who was a member of the English and Irish Houses of Commons and held various legal offices, published in 1599 his celebrated poem on the immortality of the soul, of which the full title is: "Nosce Teipsum. This Oracle expounded in two Elegies 1. Of Human Knowledge. 2. Of the Soule of Man, and the Immortality thereof". The eighteenth century knew this long poem in elegiac stanzas and ranked it high. The note prefixed to the edition of 1773 says of it: "This poem is, without dispute, except Spenser's 'Fairy Queen', the best that was written in Queen Elizabeth's or even in King James I's reign". It is one of the earliest philosophical poems in English and joins great condensation of thought to smoothness of versification.

Reference has already been made to Henry More, the Spenserian, whose immense "Psychodia Platonica; or a Platonicall Song of the Soul" appeared in 1742. It was republished in 1747, as "Philosophical Poems". Here are two stanzas about the soul and the body from this poem so popular in the second half of the seventeenth century:

Like to a light fast locked in lanthorn dark,
Whereby by night our wary steps we guide
In slabby streets, and dirty channels mark,
Some weaker rays through the black top do glide,
And flusher streams perhaps from horny side.
And when we've passed the peril of the way,
Arrived at home, and laid that case aside,
The naked light how clearly doth it ray,
And spread its joyful beams as bright as summer's day.

Even so the soul, in this contracted state,
 Confined to these strait instruments of sense,
 More dull and narrowly doth operate;
 At this hole hears, the sight must ray from thence,
 Here tastes, there smells: but when she's gone from hence,
 Like naked lamp she is one shining sphere,
 And round about the perfect cognoscence
 Whate'er in her horizon doth appear:
 She is one orb of sense, all eye, all airy ear.

Henry More's fellow-mystic and friend John Norris (1657—1711), whose "Discourse concerning the Immortality of the Soul" appeared in 1708, exercised a great influence on the literature of Gloom through his "Collection of Miscellanies" (1687), of which the tenth edition came out in 1730. This collection of poems, essays, discourses and letters carried into the eighteenth century much of the spirit of Henry More and even something of the mood of Crashaw and Vaughan. Many poets of the eighteenth century borrowed from Norris, notably Blair and Campbell¹). We quote a few parallel passages from Norris and Blair:

Like angel visits short and bright;
 Mortality's too weak to bear them long.
Norris : "Parting".

"Like those of angels, short and far between"
"The Grave", l. 589.

"You warn us of approaching death, and why
 May we not know from you what'tis to die?"
Norris : "Meditation".

"I've heard that souls departed have sometimes
 Forewarned men of their death:
 Why might you not
 Tell us, what 'tis to die?"
"The Grave" l. 435 ff.

¹) See Grosart's edition in Vol. III of the "Fuller Worthies Library" (1871).

Honour, that too officious ill,
 Won't even his breathless corpse forsake,
 But haunts and waits about him still.
 Strange persecution, when the grave
 Can't the distressed martyr save!"

*Norris: "Seeing a great
 person lying in State".*

Honour, that meddlesome officious ill,
 Pursues thee even to death, nor there stops short;
 Strange persecution! when the grave itself
 Is no protection from rude sufferance,"

"The Grave", l. 179 ff. ¹⁾

On the spiritual side, Blair's "Grave", the most influential example of the literature of Gloom, owed much to a poet who may largely be looked upon as a belated Elizabethan.

There may be some relation between the publication of Norris's "Discourse concerning the Immortality of the Soul" (1708) and John Philips' resolve in the same year to write a poem on the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment. The execution of this plan was frustrated by Philips' death, but a few years later the subject was taken up by Edward Young, who as early as 1713 published at Oxford: "A Poem on the Last Day". Young had probably read Edmund Smith's elegy on his friend (1709), in which the poet regrets that Philips had not been able to sing the Last Day. In Young's poem we occasionally find the "charnelhouse" *motif* in which Blair and his imitators revelled:

"Now charnels rattle; scatter'd limbs, and all
 The various bones, obsequious to the call,
 Self-mov'd, advance; the neck perhaps to meet
 The distant head; the distant legs the feet.

.
 Fragments of bodies in confusion fly

¹⁾ For a number of borrowings from Norris by Blair see C. Müller, Robert Blair's Grave. Diss. Jena, 1909.

To distant regions journeying, there to claim
Deserted members and complete the frame . . .

.
This sever'd head and trunk shall join once more."

Young's attempt at poetry was greatly admired. It ran into several editions and even before it was published Steele quoted from it in "The Guardian" (No. 5, May 9, 1713), in an essay on "Sacred Poetry". Of this kind of poetry in general and of Young's "Last Day" in particular Steele says:

"All other poesy must be dropped at the gate of death, this alone can enter with us into immortality. . . It shall not be forgotten, when the sun and moon are remembered no more; it shall never die, but be the measure of eternity, and the laudable ambition of heaven. How can any other poesy come in competition with it?"

No wonder therefore that Steele's "Poetical Miscellanies, By the Best Hands" (1714) contained four excursions into the realm of what was called "sacred poetry". With Parnell's "Hymn on Contentment", the anonymous "Thoughts on Eternity", T. Warton's "To Mr. Young, on his Poem on the Last Day" and Gay's "Contemplation on Night", the literature of Gloom was well on its way. Yet only one of these poems, Parnell's "Hymn", shows the influence of Milton. There is no depth of thought in these poems, but there is a good deal of funereal melancholy alien to Milton.

The next poem of the type is Miltonic in metre and style. This is James Ralph's "Night" (1728), consisting of four books. Though the preface shows that he was well acquainted with "Paradise Lost", his practice is but slightly Miltonic in form, and wholly un-Miltonic in spirit. .

When, after a lifetime devoted to Pope and the couplet, Young turned to Milton and blank verse, his mind flew back to the firstling of his youth, "The Last Day". The result was "The Night-Thoughts". Nothing can better

illustrate the scope of this once interesting, but now wearying poem than the full titles of its nine books:

“The Complaint: or Night-Thoughts, on Life, Death, and Immortality. *Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.* Virg. London: Printed for R. Dodsley at Tully’s Head in Pall-Mall, 1742. Night the Second, On Time, Death, Friendship, Humbly Inscrib’d to the Right Honourable the Earl of Wilmington. *Ib.* 1742. — Night the Third, Narcissa, Humbly Inscrib’d to her Grace the Duchess of P —. *Ib.* 1742. — Night the Fourth, The Christian Triumph, Containing our only Cure for the Fear of Death, and Proper Sentiments of Heart on that Inestimable Blessing, Humbly inscrib’d to the Honourable Mr. York, 1743. — Night the Fifth, The Relapse: 1743. — Night the Sixth, The Infidel Reclaim’d. In Two Parts. Containing The Nature, Proof, and Importance of Immortality, Part the First, Where, among other things, Glory and Riches, are particularly consider’d, Humbly Inscrib’d to the Right Honourable Henry Pelham, First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1744. — Night the Seventh, Being the Second Part of The Infidel Reclaimed, Containing the Nature, Proof, and Importance of Immortality. *G. Hawkins*, 1744. — Night the Eighth, Virtue’s Apology; or, The Man of the World Answer’d, In which are Considered, The Love of this Life; The Ambition and Pleasure, with the Wit and Wisdom of the World. *Ib.* 1745. — The Consolation (being Night the Ninth and Last). Containing, among other Things, I. A Moral Survey of the Nocturnal Heavens; II. A Night-Address to the Deity, To which are Annex’d, Some Thoughts, Occasioned by the Present Juncture, Humbly Inscribed to His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, One of his Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State. *Ib.* 1745.”

Here is immortality and worldliness in full measure. But if we ask whether all this is due to Milton, the answer must be in the negative. There is in the choice of subject-matter

a good deal of Pope's "Essay on Man" as well as of Milton, Addison and the Bible. In the metre there lurks much of the couplet under the veneer of blank verse. In diction the ancients were Young's model as much as Milton ¹). And the love of gloom? We have seen that Young had it as early as 1713, when he wrote in heroic couplets only. It is altogether unlike "Il Penseroso" and unlike "Paradise Lost". Is it to be found in the circumstances of Young's life, as his motto suggests? George Eliot has made us doubt it very much ²). It seems likely that Young, disappointed in everything, returned to the strain which, as his first poem had shown, was in his blood, a strain which had been awakened by a belated Elizabethan tradition and strengthened by the moralisings of Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison.

"The popularity of "The Grave" has been unbounded. It became everybody's Grave. The poem was copied into all school collections. It lay along with *Robinson Crusoe* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in the windows of cottages, and on the tables of wayside inns — achieving thus what Coleridge predicated over that well-thumbed copy of *Thomson's Seasons*, in the Welsh ale-house — "true fame!" It pervaded America. It was translated into other languages, and in its own it now transmigrated into a tract, now filled the page of a periodical, and now became a small separate book." ³)

Blair's "Grave" was not merely popular; it exercised an immense influence on the literature of Europe and America for more than sixty years. And when we come to ask whence the spirit came that created this poem, a poem so gruesome to us, but so dear to our ancestors, we find a number of

¹) See W. Thomas — "Le Poète Edward Young, Etude sur sa Vie et ses Oeuvres" (Paris 1901). and B. Heeg. "Edward Young's Gedicht: The Night Thoughts": Diss. Leipzig 1901.

²) See her essay: "Worldliness and Other-worldliness: The Poet Young".

³) From G. Gilfillan — "The Poetical Works of Beattie, Blair and Falconer" (1854), p. 128.

conflicting answers; — that he imitated Young's "Night Thoughts", that it is an original creation of Blair's own mind; that it was born of the spirit of the times. Such are the prevailing opinions. Fortunately the very large number of lines borrowed from or modelled upon older literature enable us to settle that the mood which went to the making of Blair's "Grave" had been nurtured at the fountain-head of Elizabethan romanticism.

Young's "Last Day" (1713) was known to Blair when he wrote "The Grave". This is proved by a few parallel passages; as in: —

"Christians, and Jews, and Turks, and Pagans stand
A blended throng, one undistinguished band."

"The Last Day"

....." 'Tis here all meet!

.....

Men of all climes, that never met before;

And of all breeds, the Jew, the Turk, the Christian".

"The Grave".

Still, this influence is slight. The resemblance between "The Night Thoughts" and "The Grave" is greater; and when we bear in mind that part of the former poem was published in 1742 and "The Grave" only in 1743, we need not wonder that for a long time Blair was supposed to have imitated Young. Thus Southey in his "Life of Cowper" (1838) said:

"Except Pope himself, there is no one whose name is so generally known in other countries as the author of the "Night Thoughts".... Yet though the strain of this poem is stamped with the strongest mannerism, and both the matter and the manner are of a kind to affect the reader powerfully and deeply, Blair's Grave is the only poem, I can call to mind which has been composed in imitation of it."

However on "25 Febr. 1741—42" Blair wrote from

Athelstane to Dr. Doddridge the following letter:

"And that I may show how willing I am to do so, I have desired Dr. Watts to transmit to you a manuscript poem of mine, intituled *The Grave*, written, I hope, in a way not unbecoming my profession as a minister of the gospel, though the greatest part of it was composed several years before I was clothed with so sacred a character. I was urged by some friends here, to whom I showed it, to make it public; nor did I decline it, provided I had the approbation of Dr. Watts, from whom I have received many civilities, and for whom I had ever entertained the highest regard. Yesterday I had a letter from the Doctor, signifying his approbation of the piece in a manner most obliging. A great deal less from him would have done me no small honour. But at the same time he mentions to me that he had offered it to two booksellers of his acquaintance, who, he tells me, did not care to run the risk of publishing it. They can scarce think (considering how critical an age we live in, with respect to such kind of writings) that a person living three hundred miles from London, could write so as to be acceptable to the fashionable and polite" ¹⁾).

"The Grave" then was partly composed long before 1742 and was certainly finished before Feb. 25th, 1742. This makes the poem independent of "The Night Thoughts"

As a whole, "The Grave" was a new departure; but the source of the materials built into this gloomy edifice can easily be traced. To Milton, Blair owes comparatively little. The blank verse is intermediate in structure between that of the Elizabethan dramatists and that of Milton; there are occasional compound epithets and inversions

¹⁾ Quoted from "The Life of Blair" in Anderson's *British Poets* Vol. VIII, p. 853. Anderson was Blair's first biographer.

as well as a few passages reminiscent of Milton, but the Miltonic spirit is lacking altogether. It is not to Milton, but to Shakespeare that Blair owes a very considerable debt. Again and again he tries to rival Shakespeare in emotional power, in diction and in metre, e. g.:

"And time when screech-owls cry, and ban-dogs howl,
And spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves".
Henry VI, P. II, I, 4.

"Again the screech-owl shrieks
Wild shrieks have issued from the hollow tombs,
Dead men have come again, and walked about."
The Grave, v. 43, 50, 51.

"The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns"
Hamlet III, i.

. that darksome place,
"Where nor device nor knowledge ever came"
The Grave, l. 295 f.

"That awful gulf no mortal e'er repassed
To tell what's doing on the other side".
The Grave, l. 372 f.

The resemblance is closest in the case of the churchyard scene in "Hamlet"; the grave-digger in "Hamlet" reminds us strongly of his colleague in "The Grave" and Hamlet's remarks on Yorick's skull are echoed in "The Grave". Shakespeare and Norris were the chief influences upon Blair.

The moralisings of the periodical literature of the day had prepared the ground for Blair's popularity. The simultaneous success of Blair and Young show that the London booksellers, who at first refused to print it, had misjudged the taste of the public. We have seen how Young in 1713, Steele's *Miscellanies* of 1714 and Parnell

had sung of the garden of Proserpine. Thomas Tickell in his "Elegy on the Death of Mr. Addison" had visited "the gloomy aisles" and "the mansions of the dead"; and Blair did the same. It was probably Riccaltoun who gave a description of the Night, its melancholy, and the spirits wailing on their tombs, in "A Winter's Day" (1726). The public were in a mood to welcome "The Grave". Its sixteenth edition was published in 1786, and as late as 1808 was published a magnificent edition, "illustrated by Twelve Etchings executed by Louis Schiavonetti, From the Original Inventions of William Blake".

The literature of melancholy was not inspired by "Il Penseroso"¹); it was the outcome of the reaction against the licentiousness of post-Restoration days. On the one hand it joined forces with the sentimental and romantic dramas of the early eighteenth century; on the other hand it traced its descent to the Elizabethan books of Melancholy. The various "melancholies" expressed by Pope, Parnell, Riccaltoun, Mallet, Blair, Young, Hervey, Thompson, Collins, Gray, the Wartons, Macpherson, Walpole and others differ much in nature and degree. Although several borrowed Miltonic form or language, and some are unmistakable imitations of "Il Penseroso", the main current is not derived from "Il Penseroso". This was at most only an important tributary.

Robert Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" (1621), the only book that took Samuel Johnson "out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise", is perhaps the most remarkable secular prose book of the Elizabethan and Miltonic ages. His manner of dealing with the causes and symptoms of melancholy, the cure of melancholy, love and religious melancholy, enabled Burton to make melancholy dear to many authors from Milton to Charles

¹) See R. D. Havens, *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. XXIV, Nov. 1919, p. 226-7.

Lamb. Thomas Warton was the first to point out that Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" owe a good deal to "The Author's Abstract of Melancholy" prefixed to Burton's work. The spirit expressed by it is more akin to Milton than to the literature of gloom. The presence of romantic melancholy is manifest:

When I go musing all alone,
Thinking of divers things foreknown,
When I build castles in the air,
Void of sorrow, void of feare,
Pleasing myself with phantasms sweet,
Methinks the time runs very fleet.

All my joyes to this are folly;
Naught so sweet as melancholy.

When I go walking all alone,
Recounting what I have ill done,
My thoughts on me then tyrannize,
Feare and sorrow me surprise;
Whether I tarry still, or go,
Methinks the time moves very slow.

All my griefs to this are jolly;
Naught so sad as melancholy.

When to myself I act and smile,
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile,
By a brook-side or wood so green,
Unheard, unsought for, or unseen,
A thousand pleasures do me bless,
And crowne my soule with happiness.

All my joyes besides are folly;
None so sweet as melancholy.

When I lie, sit, or walk alone,
I sigh, I grieve, making great mone;
In a dark grove or irksome den,
With discontents and furies then,
A thousand miseries at once
Mine heavy heart and soule ensconce.

All my griefs to this are jolly;
None so sour as melancholy.

Methinks I hear, methinks I see
Sweet musick, wondrous melodie,
Towns, palaces, and cities fine;
Here now, then there; the world is mine,
Rare beauties, gallant ladies shine,
Whate'er is lovely is divine.
All other joyes to this are folly;
None so sweet as melancholy.

Methinks I hear, methinks I see,
Ghosts, goblins, fiends: my phantasie
Presents a thousand ugly shapes:
Headless bears, black men, and apes;
Doleful outcries and fearful sights
My sad and dismal soule affrights.
All my griefs to this are jolly;
None so damned as melancholy.

Burton continued long to be popular. The mood was strengthened in the eighteenth century by the introduction of what was then called "The Spleen". The lover in the literature of the day is mostly a compound of spleen and melancholy. Lovers weep and sigh; their mood is despondent, elegiac and sentimental. Thus in Steele's "Conscious Lovers", Indiana calls out:

"What have I to do but sigh, and weep, and rave,
run wild a lunatic in chains or hid in darkness, mutter
in distracted starts and broken accents my strange
story.... All my comfort must be to expostulate in
madness, to relieve with frenzy my despair, and
shrieking to demand of fate, why — why was I
born to such variety of sorrows".

And in Steele's "Tender Husband", Biddy Tipkin, the Niece, expresses as her opinion that "a lover should sigh in private and languish whole years before he reveals his passion, he should retire into some solitary grove and make the woods and wild beasts his confidants".

In Nicholas Rowe's "The Fair Penitent" (1703), the

most romantic play of the times, described in its preface as "a melancholy Tale of private Woes", the term "melancholy" has become a stock phrase. Here is an example of the heroine's sentiments:

"Be dumb for ever, silent as the Grave,
Nor let thy fond officious Love disturb
My solemn Sadness, with the sound of Joy
If thou wilt sooth me, tell some dismal Tale
Of pining Discontent, and black Despair.

.

My sad Soul

Has form'd a dismal melancholy Scene,
Such a Retreat as I wou'd wish to find,
An unfrequented Vale o'ergrown with Trees
Mossy and old, within some lonesome Shade
Ravens and Birds ill-omen'd, only a well;
No sound to break the Silence, but a Brook
That bubbling wind's among the Weeds".

Steele loved Melancholy and Addison praised it in one of his most beautiful of the *Spectator* papers, — Sir Roger's visit to Westminster Abbey (No. 26), — where:

"the Gloominess of the Place, and the Use to which it is applied, with the Solemnity of the Building and the Condition of the People, who lie in it are apt to fill the Mind with a kind of Melancholy or rather Thoughtfulness".

Addison knew his countrymen's weakness for Melancholy and tried to raise them out of it in his Saturday papers on Cheerfulness (*Spectator*, No. 381, 387). This is what he says of the vogue of melancholy in 1712:

"Providence did not design this World should be filled with Murmurs and Repinings, or that the Heart of Man should be involved in Gloom and Melancholy.

I the more inculcate this Cheerfulness of Temper, as it is a Virtue in which our Countrymen are observed to be more deficient than any other Nation. Melancholy

is a kind of Demon that haunts our Island, and often conveys her self to us in an easterly Wind. A celebrated *French* Novelist, in Opposition to those who begin their Romances with the flowry Season of the Year, enters on his Story thus, *In the gloomy Month of November, when the People of England hang and drown themselves, a disconsolate Lover walked out into the Fields, &c.*"

The most ardent praise of Melancholy in the first quarter of the eighteenth century came from the pen of Alexander Pope. "Eloisa to Abelard" (1717) and "The Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" (1717) showed that Pope could be as fond as any of the paraphernalia of the literature of Gloom. He was no stranger

"In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heavenly-pensive Contemplation dwells,
And ever-musing Melancholy reigns."

Eloisa to Abelard, l. 1 f.

and he could be as romantic as Gray:

"But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,
Long-sounding aisles, and intermingled graves,
Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose:
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades every flower, and darkens every green,
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods."

Eloisa to Abelard, l. 163 f.

The close connection between Romance and Melancholy, which was distinctly felt by the Augustans, is well expressed in a letter of the poet William Thompson, written in 1725:

"Now I imagine you seized with a fine romantic kind of melancholy in the falling of the year; now I figure you wandering philosophical and pensive amidst the brown, withered groves, while the leaves

rustle under your feet, the sun gives a farewell parting gleam.... Then again, when the heavens wear a gloomy aspect, the winds whistle, and the waters spout." ¹).

David Mallet's "Excursion" (1728) is an imitation of "The Seasons" of Mallet's friend, James Thomson. In metre and diction it is as lavishly Miltonian as the most Miltonic parts of Philips' "Cyder". But for the following passage Mallet went neither to Milton, nor to Thomson:

"Behind me rises huge a reverend pile
Sole on his blasted heath, a place of tombs,
Waste, desolate, where Ruin dreary dwells.
Brooding o'er sightless skulls, and crumbling bones,
Ghastful he sits, and eyes with stedfast glare.
(Sad trophies of his power, where ivy twines
Its fatal green around) the falling roof,
The time-shook arch, the column grey with moss,
The leaning wall, the sculptur'd stone defac'd,
Whole monumental flattery, mix'd with dust,
Now hides the name it vainly meant to raise.
All is dread silence here, and undisturb'd,
Save what the wind sighs, and the wailing owl
Screams solitary to the mournful Moon,
Glimmering her western ray through yonder isle,
Where the sad spirit walks with shadowy foot
His wonted round, or lingers o'er his grave."

In some parts "The Excursion" reminds us of Gray's *Elegy*. The connection between graves, ruins, night and wild nature, which was to mark much of the elegiac poetry of the century, is already fairly developed in Mallet.

Shortly after the appearance of Blair's "Grave", the literature of Melancholy swelled to a mighty torrent. James Hervey's prose "Meditations and Contemplations" (1745—7), Thompson's "Sickness" (1746), Joseph Warton's "Odes" (1746), Thomas Warton's "Pleasures of Melancholy" (1747), Collins, Gray, Macpherson, Beattie,

¹) Quoted by R. D. Havens in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. XXIV, p. 226.

Walpole and many others show a delight in gloomy meditations in the evening fields, in visiting the place of skulls or in nursing their melancholy. And in this they went far beyond their sources, developed new ways and means and created a spirit of "Weltschmerz" which can no longer be called Elizabethan in any respect, but which is a genuine element of modern romance. After the appearance of "The Night Thoughts" and "The Grave", the Elizabethan influence on the literature of Gloom was merged into the new and stronger romantic desires of the modern spirit.

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The Past alone is firm, alone is sure,
You know it is, though you should know no more.
It cannot alter and it cannot die,
It does not mock you, and it does not lie.
Not God Himself, not chance, not change, not Fate
Can blot it out, post-date, or ante-date.

It is our Rock of Ages. — We have been,
Have laughed, have wept, have felt, have heard, have seen.

The children of the Past, ourselves we see
Shut in the boundless Pale of Destiny.
The Past directs. Each thought, each word, each act
Is but the product of some fertile pact
Made long ago. Set in its terms there lay
Sequestered our to-morrow and to-day.

J. ST. LOE STRACHEY.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN ELIZABETHAN AND MODERN ENGLISH ROMANTICISM

It is time to bind our sheaves. If the preceding chapters are true to fact — and fact has been sought above everything else — it is evident that Elizabethan Romanticism persisted down to a time when Modern Romanticism was well on its way, that the force and majesty of the great tide of Elizabethanism did not fall dead and stagnant against a sullen reef of classical repose, but that they swept on to join the new flood of romance that rose in the eighteenth century.

There is probably no century that has been more grossly misrepresented by loose generalisations than the eighteenth. Distinguishing labels in great variety have been attached to it. Each no doubt singles out an important aspect of the literature of the period and each may therefore to that extent contribute to an attempt to place the period in its true perspective. But the names attached to these labels are all little more than synonyms. Yet, though it is true that the age was mainly an age of the classic in literature, it was not merely an age of complete romantic occultation. We are gradually outgrowing the censorious attitude which the nineteenth century frequently took up towards its predecessor. We are, however, still inclined to regard the eighteenth century as interesting only in so far as it foreshadows Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott and the others. We tend to classify the century

into either classic or romantic. We draw contrasts which the century itself did not feel, — “re-action”, “revolt”, “revival” or “renascence” — such are the complacent abstractions with which we summarily dismiss this versatile epoch. In no more striking instance did the nineteenth century display its censorious attitude towards the eighteenth than when it accused that age of indifference or repugnance towards the great Elizabethans: Spenser and Shakespeare, and even towards Milton, whose romanticism must be regarded as a late form of Elizabethan romance. But what do we find in exploring the literature of the century, taking the term in its widest sense? We find that throughout the eighteenth century the English nation was deeply interested in Milton and Shakespeare and fairly interested in Spenser. “Paradise Lost” and “The Faerie Queene” were, — taking the size of the reading public into consideration, — as much read throughout the period as in our own days. There are large sections of society now which never read these poems, just as in the eighteenth century. After the Restoration Milton’s literary credit declined for some time as the result of the collapse of his political credit, but after John Philips, Milton’s reputation was unshakeably secure.

There is plenty of obtuse comment on the early and late Elizabethans in post-Restoration literature (what will Posterity say of some nineteenth century remarks about eighteenth century poetry?), but there is far more of intelligent appreciation and sometimes of enthusiastic eulogy. As early as 1692 the “Athenian Mercury” pronounced Milton’s minor poems “incomparable”; in 1725 Elijah Fenton found “the Mask of Comus, L’Allegro, Il Penseroso and Lycidas all in such exquisite strain, that, though he left no other monuments of his genius behind him, his name had been immortal”; in 1727 Lewis Theobald was of opinion that “the general beauties of

those two poems of Milton, intitled *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are obvious to all readers, because the descriptions are the most poetical in the world" ¹⁾. And so on *ad infinitum*.

The theories that Milton was brought into fashion by Addison, that Spenser was at best only ridiculed till the advent of "The Castle of Indolence" and that Pope and Johnson dominated the century, are contrary to fact. The English nation was more interested in "Paradise Lost" than in "The Rape of the Lock". All the poets knew their Milton, most of them sat listening at his feet. It is true that those who tried hardest to write Miltonic verse had least of Milton's genius. Longinus' maxim that we travel from the sublime to the absurd in a short time is well illustrated by many early Miltonians. But if a poet's influence can be measured by the number of his imitators, Milton's influence during this period was greater than that of any other English poet. The Miltonic influence at least equalled Pope's in strength and transcended it in duration.

There is a marked difference between Milton and Spenser in respect of the influence which they exercised. Milton was from the beginning a quickening force; Spenser promised to achieve a similar position in 1713 and 1714 when four fairly long and manifestly intentional imitations were published. But this flame almost flickered out and it did not become vigorous again till a time when modern romanticism had established itself by other ways and means. The Augustans regarded "The Faerie Queene" as an epic and applied to it epic standards. They admired the moral earnestness of the poem and its allegory, but they found it not sufficiently touched with reality; they disapproved of the stanza for epic purposes

¹⁾ Quoted by G. Sherburn in "The early popularity of Milton's Minor Poems. Mod. Phil. XVII.

and condemned the language as obsolete. Nevertheless they loved Spenser and when the new veneration for the Middle Ages and the new worship of Nature had fused into Modern Romanticism, the romantic love of Spenser, which had persisted from the beginning, was found to be the very vehicle for the new philosophy of wonder, so long as "The Faerie Queene" was viewed, not as a great epic, but as a sublime romance, borne along on a noble stanza. There was no "revival" of Spenser, for the devotion to him was deep and constant. The immediate popularity of "The Castle of Indolence" need not surprise us any more than the popularity of "The Dunciad". Whilst the attitude towards Milton changed little, the general attitude towards Spenser, on the other hand, yielded before the influence of a growing romanticism.

Too much has been made of the fact that Spenser and Milton were imitated in occasional burlesques. Some of them are trifles; and after all, parody, that envious courtesy, is a sure sign of the prevalence of a literary fashion. It is the homage that wit pays to imagination. And the age of Pope revelled in mocking everybody. Spenser was acknowledged from the first by many, though not by all, as a very great poetic genius.

A further potent influence in keeping alive the Elizabethan romantic spirit was the genius of Shakespeare. For with him, as with Spenser and Milton, we find a curious critical phenomenon: — that many, like Johnson, were able at one and the same time to condemn him for his failure to satisfy their classical canons and yet to enjoy the beauty and truth of his work, — "those who came to scoff remained to pray". So that while perhaps he was paid less lip-service than in modern days, it is true to say that, relatively, he received more of sincere and serious attention in the eighteenth than in the twentieth century.

As regards the form and language of its poetry, the dominant type of the eighteenth century is generally summed up in the term "heroic couplet". In contrast with the relative poverty of the nineteenth century in this metre, this identification is just enough. There was, however, no bigotry in the preference for the couplet. Milton's manner was studied and copied throughout the century with varying success. Spenser's manner, too, was imitated more than has generally been supposed. But in his case there is a fairly general note of dissatisfaction. It was only when the national literature had advanced quite far on its way towards modern romance that the merits of the stanza were recognised, whilst the diction was no longer deemed an indispensable asset to that stanza.

The reign of Queen Anne is noteworthy in the history of English literature in that it witnessed the first vogue of non-dramatic blank verse, centring round the figure of John Philips, and the first application of the Spenserian stanza to the themes of the day in the practice of Samuel Croxall. The first profoundly affected the unrhymed verse of the century, though at first almost nipped in the bud by the early death of its chief spokesman, whilst the second created no immediate effect through the desertion of its exponent to the other side. The part which chance plays in the shaping of the history of literature is thus significantly illustrated on the threshold of the eighteenth century. By the early death of Philips and the submission of Croxall to Pope the fate of romantic poetry was decided. But only for a decade or so. For long before Pope's death, the romantic influence exercised by Spenser and Milton, which had continued to be felt, found vent in poetry again.

The traces of the influence of Spenser and of Milton in eighteenth century poetry have frequently been claimed

as the first promise of the dawn of Modern Romanticism. The preceding pages go to show that this is true only to a limited extent. No night preceded this dawn; the Elizabethan romanticism lingered above the horizon all the time. The genuine Spenserianism of the eighteenth century was on the whole rather a belated Elizabethan Romanticism than an early outburst of Modern Romanticism. It mixed freely with the classic tastes of the day; it also kept the romantic tradition alive. The nineteenth century would only look at Spenser's romantic qualities and neglected his other merits. Yet such there undoubtedly are. Spenser drew his inspiration from the same sources as those which quickened the national life. The energy created by the soaring of that unified national spirit which was one of the effects of the Renaissance, would not and could not be confined within the limits of any previously developed poetical codes. Spenser was widely read in the classics; his poems are full of classical references; the scheme of "The Faerie Queene" was influenced by Homer and Virgil. It was the old love of medieval chivalry that gave its character to the poem. Knights and damsels, wizards and witches, giants and dwarfs, dragons and enchanters, form the *dramatis personae*; romantic events make up its incidents. The spirit of "The Faerie Queene" was the national romantic spirit. The Augustans were naturally rather inclined to look at the classical than at the romantic aspects of "The Faerie Queene". They found much in Spenser that was sympathetic to them and much that inspired them. However, an interest in Spenser does not ipso facto imply the definite influx of Modern Romanticism. In some cases it meant only a survival of Elizabethan Romance; for a new romantic element unknown to Spenser we have to wait till the appearance of "The Castle of Indolence". And even here the new element is less prominent than

the old romantic mood and the classical spirit of the day. The romantic application of Spenserian conceptions in a spirit of neo-romanticism came only after James Beattie had in theory broken the artificial Spenserian code of the Augustans; but the revised theory was not fully practised till the nineteenth century.

The adoption of Milton's verse-forms and language does not necessarily imply romanticism. Milton's verse is the most perfect blend of romantic feeling and classic expression in literature, and this compromise is typical of most Miltonians between Philips and Cowper. Milton's religious mysticism, his power of imaginative suggestion, his supernaturalism, the gorgeous Oriental splendours of his Eden, exercised a profound but evasive influence on many Miltonians. The fact that Milton had at first contemplated the Arthurian legends as the possible subject of his great work coloured his poetry:

"Faery damsels met in forest wide
By knights of Logres, or of Lyones,
Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellenore."

Paradise Regained, Book II, 359—361.

Those legends fascinated Milton and they must have fascinated those Miltonians who played their part in the re-awakening of Medieval Romanticism. The romanticism of the age of Elizabeth is the romanticism of a world of action; the poets mainly acted by impulse or intuition. The poets of the early nineteenth century were introspective; their world was a world of spiritual problems to be attacked and solved. Milton is more introspective than the other Elizabethans and in this respect his influence on the rise of Modern Romanticism must have been considerable.

The romantic qualities of Milton's verse were assisted in much of the Miltonic poetry of the eighteenth century by a profound interest in Nature. It is discernible before

1726, when it sprang into full maturity in the work of Thomson and Dyer.

The nature poetry of the first half of the eighteenth century presents itself mainly in three different aspects. First and foremost comes James Thomson, who represents Nature as a power which affects us, but does not teach us. The secrets of nature are a matter of intellectual knowledge for Thomson; for him Nature is almost no more than a subject of scientific investigation. Dyer's nature poetry shows an intense delight in the country, but Dyer did not proceed further, and in his later life he became too utilitarian in his outlook and forgot nature to write "The Fleece". The third aspect is represented by Somerville, who is interested in the pleasures of the country, in hunting and hawking, free air and "purifying breeze". The common ground between these three poets is their view of Nature in her social aspect, in her contact with Man, his pleasures and his occupations. Their country is a country peopled with human beings.

Are these attitudes derived from Milton and is the nature poetry of the century rooted in Miltonism? Very probably only to a small extent. The various aspects under which Nature is viewed by these three poets are in exact accord with their early surroundings. Their love of Nature was in the first place created by their own experiences. This makes the nature-poetry of the century for the most part independent of Miltonism. There is a good deal of nature-poetry in Miltonic metre; there is also very sound nature-poetry in couplets.

The total influence of Spenser and Milton upon the rise of Modern Romanticism may be divided into three different categories, — form, diction, and imaginative power. The usage of the verse-forms of the two poets was to many a welcome escape from the poetic myopia of the couplet to a vision of limitless horizons. The use

of the poetical diction of these powerful builders of the English language presented no less a road of liberation from the prosaic vocabulary of everyday life into strange lands of speech. Romanticism exalts the imagination in literature, Modern Romanticism most of all. The eighteenth century felt this to be the crowning glory of Spenser and Milton, — imagination. On this most eighteenth century poets and critics are agreed.

The part played by the conscious sensibility to the power of imagination on poetic impression and poetic expression in the development of Modern Romanticism is highly significant. The period between 1660 and 1800 was a period of active literary criticism; sometimes it seemed as if criticism almost promised to be as prominent as poetry. In this the period was markedly different from the Elizabethan age, when literary criticism was far inferior in quality to the creative work of the period. After 1660 the theory of criticism had great effect upon poetry. In post-Restoration days there was a fairly complete and rather consistent theory of what poetry ought to be. The demands of the critics were based upon the tradition of the ancients; the prevailing theory was an adaptation of ancient principles to modern needs. The first to overthrow this theory was Joseph Addison. In his criticism of "Paradise Lost" he confined himself mainly to an application of Aristotle's canons. In the "Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination", however, he applies the processes of thought explained by Descartes, Hobbes and Locke, and discusses the appeal of art to the imagination. This marks the difference between ancient and modern criticism; it marks the critical birth of Modern Romanticism¹). In the splendid outburst of the Elizabethans imagination achieved a great practical

¹) See M. Deutschbein, "Das Wesen des Romantischen", Cöthen, 1921 and W. Basil Worsfold, "Judgment in Literature", London, 1901.

triumph. It gave place to the return of fancy, which dominated the poetical faculty for a long time. Just as the literature of Melancholy owed its origin to a combination of the practice of the Elizabethans with the teachings of Addison and Steele, so the birth of the theory of modern romanticism sprang from the exposition of Elizabethan art by Addison and Hughes. Naturally this was but a first and weak attempt. The first important work in which the critical views of Modern Romanticism were developed was Richard Hurd's "Lectures on Chivalry and Romance" (1762). We have seen how Hurd balanced "classical" and "Gothic". His work is full of utterances of a glowing romanticism; the romantic side of "The Faerie Queene" is ardently praised, the allegory deprecated. In this deprecation of Spenser's allegory Hurd is truly modern and non-Augustan. This condemnation of Spenser's allegory, which after all is an inherent and beautiful part of the poem, has lasted down to our own day. The following words of Hurd contain the germ of the critical attitude of the nineteenth century towards the eighteenth:

"What we have gotten by this revolution, it will be said, is a great deal of good sense. What we have lost, is a world of fine fabling; the illusion of which is so grateful to the charmed spirit; that, in spite of philosophy and fashion, Faery Spenser still ranks highest among the Poets. I mean with all those that either come of that house, or have any kindness for it. Earth-born criticks may blaspheme:

"But all the gods are ravish'd with delight
Of his celestial song, and musick's wondrous might."

Eighteenth century poetry is of a dual nature. The present study is mainly concerned with one aspect; there was, of course, another as well. They did not succeed

one another, but were two expressions of the same national life. It may seem strange that the same generation should have loved both Dryden and Milton, both Pope and Spenser, and that it should have liked both the particular type of couplet which the nineteenth century most abhorred and the blank verse which it most admired. The explanation would seem to be simple. There will be comparative uniformity in the literature of a nation when there is a uniform national spirit. Common ideas beget common literature. Unity of mind creates unity of letters. This was largely the case in the golden age of Elizabeth; it was not the case in the eighteenth century. The nation's life was nowhere more characteristically expressed than in politics, and here too the nation was clearly divided against itself. The division of the political life of the nation between the two parties received a powerful impetus from the settlement of the Revolution. The reign of Queen Anne witnessed the evolution of party government out of party faction, resulting in a long struggle between the two great parties divided in principles and interests. The application of this conception of the politics of the century to the criticism of its poetry will result in a better understanding of apparently irreconcilable tendencies. Duality is the keynote of eighteenth century poetry, not uniformity.

The danger of selecting a number of prominent minds as typical, and of drawing general conclusions from the works of men whose essential characteristic is their individuality and genius, is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the history of English poetry in the eighteenth century. It is the habit of many a "primer" or "manual" to treat the poetry of the century as if it were dominated by Pope and Johnson, or even as if it were stifled under the tyranny of the school of Pope. This is like making universal history merely "*histoire de batailles*". The history of literature

is not identical with the history of individual literary genius. The history of literature is the record of the sum total of what has been written duly coördinated on a central plan. All that happens in the world of letters is part of the voice of mankind preserved for later generations. The homely letter of a simple peasant, the brilliant epigram of a wit, the scurrilous pamphlet of the political hack, the profound reflections of a philosopher, the wild prophecies of a visionary, the sublime epic and the deft sonnet, the rambling novel and the neat essay, all that has been written of man's life is part of the history of literature, which is the study of life in words.

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APPENDIX I.

EDITIONS OF SPENSER'S POEMS PUBLISHED BETWEEN 1700 AND 1800 WORKS.

1715. The works of Mr. Edmund Spenser.... With a glossary explaining the old and obscure words. Publish'd by Mr. Hughes. 6 vols. J. Tonson, London, 1715, 8°.
1750. The works of Spenser.... With a glossary explaining the old and obscure words. To which is prefixed the life of the Author, and an Essay on Allegorical Poetry, by Mr. Hughes. 6 vol. J. and R. Tonson and S. Draper: London, 1750, 12°.
1778. The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser.... From the text of Mr. Upton, M. Pool, 1778.
1782. Bell's edition of "The Poets of Great Britain", vol. 15—22. 12°.
1793. R. Anderson's "A complete edition of the Poets of Great Britain".

THE FAERIE QUEENE.

1751. The Fairie Queene.... with an exact collation of the two original editions.... To which are now added a new life of the author (by T. Birch) and also a glossary. Adorn'd with thirty-two copper-plates, from the original drawings of the late W. Kent. 3 vol. J. Brindley: London. 1751. 4°.
1758. Spenser's Fairie Queene. A new edition; with a Glossary and notes explanatory and critical by J. Upton. 2 vol. J. and R. Tonson: London. 1758. 4°.
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THE SHEPHEARDES CALENDAR.

1732. The Shepherds Calender, containing twelve Aeclogues, proportionable to the twelve months. By Edmund Spenser, Prince of English Poets. Eng. and Wal. Printed for M.M.T.C. and Gabriel Bedell, London, 1732. 8°.
1758. The Shepherds Calender. Being twelve Pastorals.... The subjects partly taken from the select pastorals of Spenser, etc. 1758. 12°.

APPENDIX II

A LIST OF SPENSERIAN IMITATIONS IN THE REGULAR SPENSERIAN STANZA PUBLISHED IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.

Year of Publication.	Number of regular Spenserian stanzas.
1595. Richard Barnefield — "Cynthia"	19
1622. Robert Aylet — "Peace with her four Gardens"	220
1622. Robert Aylet — "Thriffts Equipage".	240
1642. Henry More — "Psychodia Platonica"	1099
1647. Henry More — Philosophical Poems. (Contains a reprint of "Psychodia Platonica")	
1647. Sir Richard Fanshawe — "A Canto of the Progress of Learning."	28
1647. Sir Richard Fanshawe — "The Fourth Booke of Virgills Aeneis."	89
1653. Robert Aylet — "The Song of Songs."	41
1653. Robert Aylet — "The Brides Ornaments".	900
1653. Robert Aylet — "The Five Moral Meditations." (reprint of the 1622 edition).	220
1653. Robert Aylet — "The Five Divine and Moral Meditations." (reprint of the 1622 edition).	240
1677. Eirenaeus Philoletes (probably George Stirk or Starkey) — "Ripley Reviv'd."	15
1679. Samuel Woodford — "A Paraphrase upon the Canticles". This contains an Epoda, called "The Legend of Love" in regular Spenserian stanzas.	189

APPENDIX III

A LIST OF SPENSERIAN IMITATIONS IN THE SPENSERIAN STANZA PUBLISHED DURING THE YEARS 1700 TO 1785.
THE DATES REFER TO THE PUBLICATION.

Year of Publication	No. of regular Spenserian stanzas.
1713. Samuel Croxall — An Original Canto of Spencer's Faery Queen: Design'd as Part of his Faery Queen, but never Printed.	46
1714. Samuel Croxall — Another Original Canto of Spencer: Design'd as Part of his Faery Queen, but never Printed.	54
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